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**46th Ordinary SESSION OF THE AFRICAN
COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND
WELFARE OF THE CHILD (ACERWC)
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REPORT

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212. Ms Veronicah Wambui Mwangi, Kenya NHR, shared that they were part of the national Technical Working group responsible for the preparation of the Kenyan Periodic report. She also shared that, having been granted affiliate status, they would be submitting a report to the Committee. Miss Mwangi submitted further that the NHRI advocated for the preparation of birth registration forms with gender markers for intersex children and advocated for the treatment of children accompanying mothers to prison. She also indicated that the Commission supported the implementation of the decision of the Committee in the case of IHRDA v Kenya. She informed the audience that there were still challenges in the implementation of the Committee's decision in the Nubian children's Case. She recommended that the Committee strengthen their collaboration with NHRIs through the focal points for implementation and also have capacity building for implementation. 61

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INTRODUCTION

1. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/ Committee) held its 46h Ordinary Session from 26th November -06 December 2025. The Session was preceded by Working Group Meetings, trainings for girls' parliamentarians and bilateral engagements with the State of Libya and the Republic of Mauritius. Major activities during the Session include: the Symposium on the commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the Charter, Election of the New Bureau of the ACERWC, Bilateral engagements with State Parties, Girl Parliamentarians Training, Launch of the General Comment on Article 25 on Children without Parental Care and on Article 11 on the Right to Education, Forum on the State party reporting and implementation of the African children's Charter, Technical workshop with NHRIS on implementation of decisions and girls' rights. The paragraphs below summarize the main issues of the agenda items.

ATTENDANCE

2. The 46th Ordinary Session was attended by Representatives of Member States, Representatives of the African Union Commission, African Union organs, Children's Representatives, Civil Society Organizations, Network of African National Human Rights Institutions and National Human Rights Institutions, Representatives of UN Agencies as well as international, regional and local non-governmental organisations.

ITEM 1: Procedural Matters and Organisation of work

3. Prior to the opening ceremony of the 46th Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/the Committee), the Committee convened to consider some preliminary procedural matters. After adopting the agenda, the Committee proceeded to allocate Members for the consideration of applications of Observer Status. Rapporteurs and co-rapporteurs were also assigned to consider Civil Society Organization (CSO) complimentary reports and Communications.

ITEM 2: OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY

4. The Acting Executive Secretary, Dr. Ayalew Getachew, moderated the Opening ceremony. He gave brief remarks, reflecting on the state of the rights of children on the continent, welcomed renewed revitalisation of the State Reporting Procedure while recognising the persistent challenges. He acknowledged the presence of diverse participants which would enhance the quality of deliberations. He also recognised the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and thanked the Kingdom of Lesotho for its continued support to the ACERWC. The following Statements were made during the Opening ceremony:

Remarks by children's Representative: Miss Kamohelo Sesinyi, Child Representative from Lesotho

5. Miss Kamohelo Sesinyi, a girl from the Kingdom of Lesotho delivered the speech on behalf of the African children. The Ordinary Session, she said, is a reminder of the promises made by Member States to the Charter to uphold the rights of children on the continent. She reflected on her personal experiences as a visually impaired child and identified the challenges of living in an ableist world. She expressed the struggles of visually impaired children lacking braille facilities and children with physical impairments navigating buildings without accessibility assistance. She urged all stakeholders to prioritise inclusion and ensure that policies adopted by States consider children with disabilities.

Remarks by CSO Forum Representative -Ms Felistus M Motimedi

6. Miss Motimedi, reiterated the call made by the Children's representative to advocate for accessibility even at the Ordinary Sessions. She recognised and honoured all the Civil Society Representatives for their work and shared that they were equal contributors to the continental agenda on the rights of children. She congratulated the Committee on Championing child participation by platforming children in the ordinary session. She also welcomed the agenda for the session noting that it included crucial discussions and demonstrated the diligent work of the committee.

7. She further highlighted that the CSO forum had been convened and discussed child-friendly budgeting, child safeguarding and inclusivity, the impacts of climate change and global poverty on the protection of the rights of the child emphasising the need of mobilisation of child-friendly climate financing, and the impact of the decline in development funding among other agenda items. She highlighted that the forum concluded that funding shortages did not only affect the ability of child rights CSOs to conduct their work, but also on livelihoods and households. She mentioned that the CSO forum convened Children 20 to ensure that children were involved in the G20 discussions. In conclusion she called for urgent collaboration between the Committee, State Parties and the Committee and renewed the CSO Forum's commitment to complimenting the Committee's mandate.

Remarks by the Executive Director of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) Mr Gilbert Sebihogo

8. Mr. Sebihogo delivered his statement virtually, opening by expressing his pleasure at joining the continent in the 46th Ordinary Session. He congratulated the Committee and all stakeholders on the 35th Anniversary of the Charter and shared that the rising conflicts, harmful business practices, climate and acute poverty were part of the most urgent threats to the rights of the child on the continent. Recognising the intersection of those different but related crises, he called on State parties to develop resilient food security systems.

9. He remarked that the Committee's leadership on issuing General Comments on the right to education and the rights of children without parental care is a most welcome normative development and contributes towards achievement of Agenda 2040.

10. He submitted that throughout 2025, NHRIs had continued supporting the effective implementation of the Charter through their reinforcement of national Child protection ecosystems. He highlighted that NANHRI remained committed to supporting the Committee's work through data sharing, coordination, research and advocacy. He thanked all participants and the Committee for their successful convening of the ordinary session.

Remarks by Mr Marcel Clement Akpovo, Regional Director and Representative of OHCHR to the AU (Virtual)

11. Mr. Akpovo recognized the existing protocol and thanked the Committee for the invitation. He highlighted that the OHCHR and the ACERWC were critical partners who worked together in the protection of the rights of children. Mr. Akpovo took note of the ongoing children's rights concerns on the continent including the persistence of FGM, the recruitment of child soldiers as well as the discrimination against children with disabilities. He stressed that these could only be remedied by effective collaboration amongst all stakeholders and prioritization of child protection and wellbeing in every legislative and policy decision. He also welcomed the improvements of birth registration on the continent. He commended the Committee on its facilitation of child participation.

12. Mr. Akpovo emphasized that the most urgent need in the protection of the rights of children was implementation by State parties, including that of decisions and recommendations in Concluding Observations. He especially called on Member States to also ensure that the Committee was well resourced to guarantee the achievement of its mandate. He also called upon the States that have not done so to urgently ratify the Charter to achieve universal ratification. In his conclusion, Mr. Akpovo reaffirmed the commitment of the OHCHR to continue its cooperation with the ACERWC to protect and promote the rights of children.

Remarks by Dr Laila Gad, UNICEF Representative to the AU

13. Dr. Gad welcomed all delegates, recalling that the Ordinary Session was a time for reflection on the 35 years of the existence of the charter. She recognized that hard challenges persist including forced displacement, online violence, conflict, and climate change. She also propounded that the emerging challenges to the rights of the child affected girls and adolescents differently and called for recognition of intersectionality. She submitted that now more than ever it was urgent to revisit the aspirations of the children of Africa enshrined in Agenda 2040.

14. She called for strengthening child protection through child friendly budgeting and inclusive investment. She emphasized that child protection is impossible without collaboration and consultation and urged all State parties to include children's participation at every stage of decision-making. Dr. Gad stressed that effective implementation of the Charter required a holistic and systematic implementation of the Charter required prioritization of investing in children. In her conclusion, Dr. Gad reiterated UNICEF's commitment to cooperation with the ACERWC in the exercise of their common mandate.

Remarks by Hon. Louis Cheick Sissoko, The presiding officer, African Union Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) (Video)

15. On behalf of Hon. Sissoko, the representative from ECOSOCC extended gratitude for the invitation to the session. He highlighted the power behind the theme and dissected what it meant to children's rights and highlighted the importance of creating a conducive environment for an African child to thrive and eliminating possible barriers which could hinder the attainment of this goal.

16. He commended the Committee's commitment towards implementation of the Charter within member states. He highlighted the importance of coupling policies with actions. He lamented that reflections on this week's activities should guide the way forward for the Committee in ensuring that the Committee's mission is accomplished.

Remarks by Hon Idrissa Sow, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (Video)

17. Hon. Sow expressed gratitude and affirmed solidarity with the Committee on the current theme "reflect, renew, recommit." He commented that amidst the continental challenges, efforts of the Committee in building jurisprudence for the protection of child rights had not gone unnoticed. He stated that the Rights for children should not be viewed in isolation from all other continental challenges Africa is facing.

18. As the newly elected chair, Hon Sow declared his renewed re-commitment to enforce and promote child protection. He highlighted the need to support member states in realization of child rights and performance of their obligations as member states. He reiterated that decisions taken during the session be a guiding tool for the Committee.

Children's Performance

19. There was a children's performance featuring dance, drama, singing, and poetry.

Remarks by Hon. Lady Justice Chafika Bensaoula, Vice President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights on behalf of the President of the Court (Video)

20. Hon. Bensaoula expressed gratitude for the opportunity to make an address and went on to reflect on the previous achievements of the Committee. She shared that these should be used as tools to leverage child rights realization across African. She highlighted the significant role played by the Charter and other international instruments in advancing child rights. Hon. Bensaoula indicated that the rights of the child were a Universal concern in the African human rights system recalling that even the Court had made findings on the rights of the child. She referred to the case of IHRDA and Other v The Republic of Mali in which the court found that child marriage violates the rights of girls under the Charter.

21. Hon. Bensaoula noted that access to education, health, and child recruitment were some of the persistent challenges that affected children in Africa. These challenges, served as a constant reminder to Africa to remain relentless in the fight for children's rights. In conclusion, the Honorable Juge wished the committee productive deliberations for the remainder of the session.

Remarks by Hon Chief Fortune Charumbira President of the Pan African Parliament

22. Ms Lindiwe Khumalo, Clerk of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) shared the President's apologies and inability to attend in person due to a competing commitment.

She shared a word of congratulations on the 46th Ordinary Session in her personal capacity and went on to read the statement on behalf of the President.

23. Ms Khumalo began by acknowledging the significant progress made over the years in advancing the welfare and protection of children across the continent. However, she emphasized that despite these efforts, many children still face serious challenges that hinder their growth, safety, and overall well-being. Issues such as limited access to education, inadequate healthcare, and various forms of exploitation and abuse remain persistent in several regions.

24. She informed that PAP re-affirms its unwavering commitment to addressing these gaps and ensuring that no child is left behind. Madam Khumalo assured the Committee that PAP is dedicated to supporting the translation of the Charter into all relevant languages, so that its principles become accessible and meaningful to every community. This, she stressed, is a vital step in strengthening the understanding, implementation, and enforcement of the Charter at all levels.

25. Furthermore, she highlighted PAP's ongoing role in monitoring compliance, promoting accountability, and working closely with partner institutions to create an environment where the rights of children are not only protected but actively promoted. She concluded by calling upon all stakeholders to remain steadfast and united in advancing this noble cause.

Remarks by H.E. Dr Maryam Ismaila Keshinro, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women Affairs on behalf of the H.E. the Minister of Women Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

26. Dr Maryam Ismaila Keshinro informed that Nigeria faced the darkest moment due to continuous acts of terrorism, where children were being abducted in schools. She further said that Nigeria remained committed to the implementation of the African Charter through strengthening its domestic legislation and policy framework for the protection and promotion of children's rights. Dr Keshinro informed that the government of Nigeria had launched its national guidelines to reduce the challenge of violence against children.

27. Dr. Keshinro stressed that Nigeria continued with efforts to reduce child marriages through updating its legislation and crafting new policies to protect children. She mentioned that Nigeria is crafting National Standard Operating Procedures to regulate children's care centers. Menstrual health, she said has been set as a priority in restoring the dignity of the girl child in Nigeria.

28. She mentioned that the government continued to invest in child participation through the capacitation of child parliamentarians. She said despite numerous challenges Nigerian government continued to forge partnerships with other governments to address the plight of children on the move. She highlighted that climate change, trafficking and online safety remain a challenge in children's rights violations.

Remarks by Mr. Paulo Kalesi, General Director of the National Children's Institute on behalf of H.E Minister of Social Action, Family and Promotion of Women of the Republic of Angola

29. Mr. Kalesi informed that the government of Angola continues to strengthen its national laws to protect children. He mentioned that Angola is concerned with the

impact of business on children's rights and the rights of disabled children. He highlighted that the government is working on poverty reduction and inequality, which continue to be a challenge in the realization of children's rights.

30. Mr. Kalesi said that the government was expanding social welfare to cushion vulnerable populations such as children. He mentioned that Angola has increased its collaboration with other SADC countries in fighting hunger and malnutrition. He said violence against children and harmful cultural practices remain a challenge. He said Angola is committed to the implementation of the African Children's Charter.

Hon Aver Gavar, Vice Chairperson of the ACERWC, on behalf of the Chairperson of the ACERWC

31. Hon Aver Gavar informed that this year the Committee received six State Party reports, from Egypt, Kenya, Burundi, Eritrea, Mauritania and The Gambia, and has documented numerous legislative and institutional reforms undertaken by Member States to advance children's rights. She highlighted that the year 2025 recorded the most distressing violations against children, such as the rise in fatalities associated with Female Genital Mutilation, as well as the severe humanitarian situations facing children in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and other conflict-affected regions. She said the continued abduction of schoolgirls in parts of Nigeria remains a deeply distressing reminder of the threats faced by children, particularly girls, which requires an urgent need for coordinated, sustained, and collective action from all stakeholders.

32. She underscored the need for member states to recognise and give life to the rights, freedoms, and duties enshrined in the Charter by reaffirming that any custom, tradition, cultural or religious practice inconsistent with the Charter has no place in our societies. She emphasised that State Parties must recommit to their procedural obligations as eight States are yet to submit their initial reports. She also informed that the committee will launch two General Comments, on Article 25 concerning Children Without Parental Care, and on Article 11 on the Right to Education; curates expert panels to explore Harmful Practices and Violence Against Children; Planning and Budgeting for Children; the Role of Parliamentarians; Child-Friendly Cities; and the rights of children with intellectual disabilities. Hon Gavar further announced that the 46th Ordinary Session marks the end of the term of office of the current Bureau. As she concludes, she expressed appreciation to all stakeholders and partners who have technically and financially supported the conduct of the Session.

Hon. Nthomeng Majara, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho

33. Hon. Nthomeng Majara started by stressing the need to involve children on issues affecting them. she highlighted Lesotho's commitment to implement the Charter through continuous strengthening of the domestic legal framework by amending the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011, which enshrines core Charter principles, such as non-discrimination, the paramountcy of children's best interests, the right to life and development, and respect for children's evolving capacities. Hon Majara said the 2023 Amendment to this Act represented a significant legislative milestone. Specifically, it offers more protection to children without parental care, enhanced penalties for child trafficking and sexual exploitation, expands the definition of harmful practices to explicitly include child marriage and female genital mutilation,

and establishes clearer protocols for inter-agency coordination in child protection cases.

34. She informed that despite legislative provisions, the country continues to face the challenge of birth registration, child marriages, corporal punishment, and children Without Parental Care. She highlighted that most of these challenges are caused by inadequate budgetary allocation to child protection and welfare services, and insufficient human and financial resources limit implementation.

35. She underscored the need for technical guidance from the Committee on priority areas for strengthening implementation, particularly regarding birth registration systems, preventing and responding to harmful practices, and building functional alternative care systems. She highlighted the importance of peer learning from other States Parties who have successfully addressed similar challenges, partnership opportunities with UN agencies, international organizations, and civil society to support implementation through technical assistance, capacity building, and resource mobilization.

36. She emphasized the need to engage constructively with the Committee's observations and recommendations, treating them as authoritative guidance for strengthening implementation, prioritizing budgetary allocation to child protection, recognizing that rights without resources remain aspirational rhetoric and strengthening coordination mechanisms across government ministries, ensuring policy coherence and integrated service delivery. She declared the meeting open.

ITEM 3: Remarks by Member States

37. The following Member States gave brief progress reports on the initiatives taken to implement the provisions of the ACRWC: the Republic of Cabo Verde, Central Africa Republic, The Gambia, Republic of Kenya, The State of Libya, Republic of Mauritius and The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

ITEM 4: Remark by NHRIs with Affiliate Status

38. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) with affiliate status from the following countries delivered brief remarks: Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Kenya, South Africa and Zambia. The NHRIs made remarks on the progress made in the implementation of the Charter and the protection of children's rights. The NHRIs did highlight the challenges in their respective countries including-childhood poverty, the rise of child sexual violence and exploitation, the impact of climate change, harmful cultural practices., lack of adequate funding and the difficulties associated with quality data.

39. They concluded with recommendations to the Committee and Member States that include strengthening of child protection and safeguarding training, protection of children affected by conflict, adoption of stronger inter-office coordination to strengthen child protection measures. and prioritization of the sexual reproductive health rights of adolescents.

ITEM 5 : Statements by UN Agencies and International Partner Organizations

40. Mr Mohamed Suma on behalf of Mr Marcel Akpovo, Regional Director of OHCHR East Africa Regional Office and Representative to the African Union, congratulated the Committee on the commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the Charter. He

acknowledged progress made across Member States in areas such as ratification, legislative alignment, birth registration, education, and healthcare, while noting continuing and emerging challenges affecting children's rights, including harmful practices, conflict and displacement, discrimination against children with disabilities, child labour and trafficking, technology-facilitated violence, shrinking civic space, and the growing impact of climate change. He stressed that implementation remains a significant gap, and emphasised the need for stronger national coordination, increased use of National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-Up (NMIRFs), as well as reinforcement of partnerships with NHRIs and CSOs. He further encouraged Member States to ensure adequate and sustainable financing for the Committee's mandate, to ratify the Charter where still outstanding, and to withdraw existing reservations.

ITEM 6 : Statements on the recommendations of the CSO Forum and Children's Consultation

41. The CSO Forum reiterated its commitment to collaborating with the Committee to advance the implementation of the Charter and raised concerns including the reduction of funding for child protection programmes, the impact of climate change on children's rights, prolonged conflict and displacement, persistence of harmful practices, barriers to education for pregnant adolescents and children with disabilities, the limited participation of children in decision-making, weaknesses in national data systems, and the growing risks children face online. The CSO Forum provided the following recommendations for Member States to increase public financing for child-focused policies and services; strengthen enforcement of laws prohibiting harmful practices; ensure access to education for all children; prioritise support and integrated services for children affected by climate change, displacement, and emergency situations; strengthen digital protection frameworks and develop coordinated responses to online abuse and exploitation; and improve data systems and accountability mechanisms to enable evidence-based planning and open monitoring.

42. The CSO Forum also made recommendations to the ACERWC, calling on the Committee to strengthen follow-up on the implementation of decisions and concluding observations, including through monitoring frameworks accessible to CSOs and children; enhance dissemination and uptake of General Comments and develop child-friendly versions to support implementation at national level; integrate climate change within reporting guidelines and monitoring tools; expand opportunities for meaningful child participation in regional processes, budgeting, and policy formulation; and strengthen collaboration with CSOs and NHRIs to support advocacy and implementation of the Committee's decisions.

43. A child representative from Kenya, presented the Outcome Statement of the Children's Forum, reflecting perspectives gathered from children across Africa. The statement highlighted ongoing challenges, including child marriage, discrimination against children with disabilities, lack of access to education and healthcare, absence of identity documentation, exposure to online harm, and the increasing burden of climate-related crises leading to displacement, hunger, and insecurity. Name noted frustration with the limited opportunities for children to influence policy and decisions affecting their lives meaningfully. The Children's Forum made the following recommendations for governments to guarantee access to education for all children, including pregnant adolescents and young mothers; strengthen protection systems and enforce laws to end child marriage and other harmful practices; create safe spaces

for children and expand child-friendly reporting and support mechanisms; take urgent climate action that addresses the needs of children and includes them in climate policy processes; ensure robust digital safety measures and protect children from online violence and exploitation; and include children meaningfully in decision-making platforms at national, regional, and continental levels.

ITEM 7: Briefings by Organizations with Observer Status

44. The following organisations with observer status addressed the Committee: Joining Forces Alliance (Child Fund International; Plan International; Save the Children; SOS Children's Villages; Terre des Hommes, and World Vision International), African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA), Dullah Omar Institute (DOI), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Centre for Human Rights, AfriChild Center, Centre for Reproductive Rights, Equality Now, Uganda Child Rights NGO Network, Graca Machel Trust, Women's Probono Initiative, African Early Childhood Network, Lumos Foundation, Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI), African Institute for Childhood Studies, Legal and Human Rights Centre, Ogedegede Community Development Foundation, Windford Centre For Children And Women, Child Helpline International, Centre for Child Law, and Child's I Foundation.

45. They shared updates on their ongoing initiatives and provided the following recommendations and considerations for the Committee:

- ✓ Elevate persistent non-compliance to the AU Executive Council and name non-compliant States Parties in Activity Reports.
- ✓ Strengthen advocacy and visibility of children's experiences in the climate crisis, including promoting implementation of the Africa Children's Climate Declaration and call on States Parties to adopt child-sensitive climate action and financing, as well as support structures that enable meaningful participation of children in climate policymaking platforms.
- ✓ Strengthen advocacy to States Parties to fully implement continental commitments and pledges on ending harmful practices, and to uphold and strengthen legal protections against FGM, prevent any efforts to weaken existing laws, enact national legislation where it is still absent, and ensure survivor-centered approaches.
- ✓ Encourage States Parties to enforce 18 as the minimum age of marriage without exception, and harmonize statutory, customary and religious laws.
- ✓ Encourage States Parties to expand access to mental health and psychosocial support services for children in crisis and conflict contexts, those experiencing displacement or trauma, and survivors of violence and harmful practices.
- ✓ Follow up on the implementation of the Model Law on Children Affected by Armed Conflict and on issues relating to abductions and education disruption and strengthen visibility of children's plight in AU peace and security agendas.
- ✓ -. Expand and institutionalize mechanisms for meaningful child participation, including regional and national versions of the African Children's Symposium.
- ✓ Develop targeted guidance for reporting on early childhood development (ECD) and integrate ECD indicators into reporting and monitoring processes.

- ✓ Encourage and support Member States in establishing and operationalizing NMIRFs to enhance coordinated reporting and implementation.
- ✓ Continue to strengthen continental coordination on digital safety and online child protection and support Member States to ensure safe digital environments for children.
- ✓ Encourage reforms to eliminate discrimination in nationality laws and address barriers that lead to childhood statelessness.
- ✓ Monitor implementation of General Comment No. 10 and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework on children without parental care and promote reforms prioritizing family- and community-based care.

46. The CSOs commended the Committee for successfully convening the 46th Ordinary Session and commemorating the 35th anniversary of the Charter. The organisations reaffirmed their commitment to continued partnership with the Committee and to supporting the implementation of the Charter and the Committee's decisions and recommendations.

ITEM 8: Remarks by Development Partners

47. Ms Sophia Gallina, Head of the AWARE Project (Women's Empowerment and Human Rights) and representing the GIZ African Union, delivered a statement on behalf of the Director of the GIZ African Union, Dr Tobias Thiel. She underscored the longstanding cooperation between GIZ and the Committee through the AWARE project, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, which has contributed to strengthening the Committee's work, including the Communications Procedure, the promotion of girls' participation and the empowerment of future parliamentarians. Ms Gallina noted the evolving challenges affecting children's rights, including protracted crises, climate-related risks, shrinking civic space, and reductions in funding for human rights. She informed the Committee that the current phase of the AWARE project will conclude in June 2026, and that discussions are underway on its next phase expected to commence in July 2026, reflecting GIZ's continued commitment to supporting human rights work within the African Union system, including that of the Committee.

ITEM 9 : Analytical Tripartite Study on Challenges of Litigating Women and Girls' Rights by Dr. Satang Nabaneh, Consultant

48. Document will be put before the Committee for consideration during the closed session.

ITEM 10 : Briefings about the Activities of the Working Groups of the ACERWC

WORKING GROUP ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

49. Hon. Aver Gavar, Chairperson of the Working Group on Children's Rights and Climate Change, briefed the Committee and participants of the Session on the activities, progress, and challenges of the Working Group during 2025. She recalled

that climate change remains one of the most significant child protection challenges in Africa, affecting a wide range of rights under the ACRWC.

50. Hon. Gavar further reported on the key activities undertaken to popularize the findings of the Continental Study and advance the Working Group's campaign. In addition, she reported that the Working Group is in the process of contributing to the ongoing process of developing an Advisory Opinion before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, with a draft input adopted during the 9th Working Group meeting.

51. In conclusion, Hon. Gavar acknowledged that some activities envisaged under the workplan required scaling down due to resource constraints and informed that the achievements realized were made possible through strong collaboration with civil society organizations. She expressed deep appreciation to the outgoing external experts for their exceptional contributions and reaffirmed that the road ahead will focus on consolidating gains, applying lessons learned, and advancing child-rights based climate advocacy. She reiterated that the climate crisis continues to intensify and emphasized the need for sustained, strategic, and united efforts to protect the rights and welfare of children across the continent.

WORKING GROUP ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND BUSINESS

52. Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing, Chairperson of the ACERWC Working Group on Children's Rights and Business, presented the Group's activities for the year 2025. She reported that the Working Group had undertaken significant advocacy through thematic statements and participated in numerous high-level events organized by various partners. These engagements focused on integrating a child-rights approach into business practices and advancing corporate accountability across the continent.

53. The Chairperson highlighted several key achievements, notably the inaugural Stakeholders' Engagement Forum held in Addis Ababa. She described the event as a landmark, structured engagement with a wide range of actors, including the AU Commission, Member States, private sector representatives, and civil society, which strengthened consensus on priority actions. Furthermore, she reported that the Working Group had finalized a Policy Brief on Access to Remedies for Corporate Violations of Children's Rights, which is expected to provide critical guidance once adopted by the Committee.

54. In concluding her remarks, Hon. Kembo outlined the Working Group's future priorities, which include developing state party reporting guidelines, deepening engagement with the private sector and the AfCFTA Secretariat and participating in the upcoming Global Child Labour Conference. She expressed profound gratitude to the Group's partners and external experts for their invaluable support and called for continued collaboration to ensure business practices in Africa uphold the rights and welfare of every child.

WORKING GROUP ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

55. Hon. Aboubekrine El Jera, the Chairperson of the Working Group on Children with Disabilities began by underscoring the Working Group's commitment since its establishment in 2020 to promoting and protecting the rights of children with disabilities in Africa. He then outlined the activities of the Working Group in 2025, including the development of a Guiding Note on Reporting on the Rights and Welfare of Children

with Albinism where stakeholders were strongly encouraged to utilize in their national work and engagements with the Committee.

56. Hon El Jera also outlined the two statements issued by the Working Group this year: on the International Albinism Awareness Day calling for action and the second one issued during the Day of the African Child focusing on greater investment, urging State Parties to center children with disabilities in socioeconomic policymaking, and implement targeted social protection programmes.

57. Hon El Jera informed that the Working Group will host a session on children with intellectual disabilities during the 35th Anniversary Celebration and will release a statement for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities to amplify the call for an inclusive society. In conclusion, the Chairperson expressed deep appreciation to the members and external experts of the Working Group for their dedication and expertise. A final call was made for all stakeholders to strengthen their collaboration with the Working Group to advance the rights of children with disabilities across Africa.

WORKING GROUP ON IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

58. Hon. Robert Nanima, Chairperson of the ACERWC Working Group on Implementation of Decisions and Recommendations, reported on the Group's activities and persistent challenges. He underscored that the partial or non-implementation of the Committee's decisions remains a pressing issue, requiring sustained political will, resources, and collaboration to bridge the gap. Despite these challenges, the Working Group had convened for its 8th meeting, where it assessed the status of implementation, evaluated state compliance, and strategized on actions to strengthen its work.

59. The Chairperson highlighted several key achievements, including the official launch of the flagship Study on the Implementation of Decisions. He also noted the adoption of the Guidelines on Reparations to ensure measures ordered by the Committee are implementable, and the continued promotion of National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-Up (NMIRFs) through a dedicated resolution and panel discussions.

60. In concluding, Hon. Nanima expressed gratitude for the strategic support from partners and the dedication of the Working Group's external experts. However, he noted that the Group's activities have been conducted with limited resources and largely through internal efforts. He therefore called upon all stakeholders and partners to deepen their collaboration and provide support to ensure the Committee's decisions translate into tangible improvements in the lives of children across Africa.

ITEM 11: Launch of the General Comment on Article 25 on Children without Parental Care

Keynote Address by Hon Anne Musiwa, Special Rapporteur on Children Without Parental Care

61. Hon. Musiwa started by briefing participants on the Panel Discussion that would lead to the launch of the General Comment. She then proceeded to make her keynote address on the added value of the document. She highlighted the key findings of the Study on Children Without Parental care and its contribution to the development of the General Comment. Hon Musiwa emphasized that family and community care should

be considered first when considering alternative care, and institutionalization should always be last resort. She further stressed the importance of collecting data on children without care to inform policies and care systems reforms.

Children Without Parental Care: Factors and Drivers of Vulnerabilities and Risks Including Orphanage Trafficking as a Challenge in Institutional Care

62. Ms. Rose Kagoro, from Railway Children Africa, spoke on both individual and systemic structures that contribute to vulnerabilities and risks of CWPC, highlighting stigma for children born out of wedlock, gender expectations for disproportionate care beliefs on mother, and violence cause family breakdowns. She informed that weak institutions, and policies that favour residential care and humanitarian crises amplify separation. She further reflected that in as much as kinship care is favoured, care work entails hidden work that overwhelms carers and that emergency context contributes to both separation, educational delay and more vulnerabilities and risks especially for children with disabilities, child refugees, displaced children and those who have lost their documents. She then highlighted the issue of orphanage trafficking driven by poverty needs to be addressed. She then suggested that these vulnerabilities and risks can be overcome by strengthening family support systems, investing in systems of care, and addressing gender stereotypes and early marriage as they also contribute to separation. Additionally, collaborations, co-designing of programmes and interventions, and coordinated programs, and criminal accountability may reduce such vulnerabilities and risks.

Family Reintegration and other Strategies as an Alternative to Conventional Care Systems: Parenting as a Preventative Measure

63. Grace Mwangi, Country Director, Lumos Foundation Kenya, stated that family reintegration and parenting are protective measures against separation and that there is a need for capacity building for parents to strengthen capacities as this is vital for children to realise their right to a family. She also emphasized on the need for work force and case management for children, and to include the views of the care givers, and children, especially those in charitable institutions, in the process. Case management, she said, is central and lays foundation for proper integration as each child is unique and therefore requires tailored approaches for their needs for pre-unification and pre-integration. She also emphasized on need for the workforce to be capacitated on proper reintegration. Additionally, that lack of resource for case management is an issue and affects sustainable integration which is necessary for care systems reform.

64. Ms Namirembe Christine, from Care Experienced Person, shared her experience in a children's institution. She pointed out the challenges of children living in care institution including the lack of parental care and love, attention, a sense of belonging or individual preparation to integrate back as a functioning member of society. She highlighted that the institution only offered basic necessities for their physical welfare..

Child Care Institutions and Systems Reform: Implementation of Recommendations from Study, General Comment and Monitoring tool

65. Mr Eyob Negash, from SOS Village International, stated that care reform prevents separation and unnecessary institutionalisation of children. He further said that the reform process recognises that the child needs to be reunified with their family and community for love and a sense of belonging. He elaborated on the different schools of thought around child reform such as those that advocate for complete abolishment, while others advocate for progressive realisation of care reform. Mechanisms such as gatekeeping exist to realise this reform. Highlighting the challenges, he stated that climate change and humanitarian crises are contexts that require investment in policy and legislative reform. He stressed that State Parties should be supported with technical skills and data and there is also a need for consideration for care options such as kinship care so that institutionalization becomes a last resort, and preventative measures must be prioritised. He further presented a multistakeholder approach to prevention as an achievable strategy, especially by offering economic and psychosocial support to families. In conclusion, he reiterated the need for case management and data management for care reforms.

Reflection and Experiences from Member States Representatives

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

66. Mr. Elie NTUKA M-KANCHA, from DRC/Ministry of Justice presented on the state of child protection systems and institutions, and children without parental care in DRC and stated that the duty of child protection rests with both state and non-state actors. He further said that the Constitution recognises the rights of the child, and together with the child protection law, Law No. 09/001 of January 10, 2009 on child protection, sets out principles for the administrative and judicial institutions of government. He further stated that the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children ensure the promotion and protection of children's rights and collaborates with other sectoral ministries. Further to this “children in difficult situations” are recognised and offered protection under the Child Protection Law (Article 62). He stated that the government has established a catch-up school program for street children, has reunified some children with their families, and some children are supervised in open or closed accommodation centres, waiting for the family reunification. Additionally, that free primary education has enabled vulnerable children to access education. In closing, he acknowledged the conflict in the eastern region of DRC which has contributed to children being in difficult situations and made an appeal for African solidarity in favour of the children of the DRC.

The Republic of Kenya

67. Mr. Abdinoor Mohamed from Kenya made a presentation on the progress of the Republic of Kenya on Care Reform. He stated that there are approximately 45 000 children childcare institutions in Kenya, and the common factors for separation include poverty, disability, and parental loss. He informed that the Children Act, Cap 141 Laws of Kenya, is intended to strengthen family and community-based care, and

recommends institutionalization is a measure of last resort, and that children can only be committed for a maximum of 3 years. He added that the State Department for Children Services leads care reforms-and has developed a National Care Reform Strategy (2022–2032) while the NCCS regulates, coordinates, and oversees children's services, including care reforms. He further highlighted that there are currently 902 CCIs and 30 statutory institutions nationwide, however registration of new CCIs, and the Care Reform has been rolled out in all the counties, which include the parenting programmes and the Cash Transfer Programme for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (Inua Jamii), and child headed households are included in the programmes.

The Arab Republic of Egypt,

68. Dr Abdel- Razek presented on the social welfare system of the Arab Republic of Egypt and highlighted some of its challenges as financial support and capacity to accommodate 10 million refugees, as this exerts pressure on government resources. He highlighted that transition of deinstitutionalisation to family-based care is one of their successes. There has been a legal amendment for fostering children from 3 months old, and the state offers legal representation for unaccompanied minors. Additionally, they have extended the Kafalah network, and also lowered the requirement for parents to foster from 5 years to 3 years of marriage. Further to this they recognise preventative measures as foundational and therefore target children and families and provide parental training, offer support for working parents, and have established nurseries and early childcare. In conclusion he stated that the government also combats harmful practices that lead to separation.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria,

69. Ms Rebecca Odungide informed of the success of the Federal Republic of Nigeria regarding alternative care. She stated that the government has developed an initiative for child protection that includes separated children, children in conflict, internally displaced children. She added that initiative also focuses on the children's rights to education, and that there are various other initiatives that aim to assist children without parental care such as free school feeding programs.

70. In closing the chair addressed the rest of the questions, and reiterated that loss of parental care affects many child, and it is imperative to heed our African traditions of care that extends to communal care, as the concept of family extends beyond the nuclear family.

ITEM 12: Election of the New Bureau of the ACERWC

71. The Committee elected its new Bureau for a period of two years and the outcome was as follows:

- ✓ Chairperson: Hon. Sabrina Gahar
- ✓ Vice Chairperson: Hon. Ghislain Roch Etsan
- ✓ Rapporteur: Hon. Poloko Nuggert Ntshwarang

ITEM 13 : Symposium on the 35th Anniversary of the Charter

Opening Ceremony

Remarks by EllyJoy Wanjiru Githambo, Child Representative from South Africa

72. Miss EllyJoy Wanjiru spoke as a Pan-African adolescent girl representing children across the continent. She reflected on the progress made since the adoption of the African Children's Charter, contrasting her mother's limited educational opportunities with her own access to free primary education, support, and the ability to participate in high-level forums. She emphasized that these improvements are direct results of the Charter's impact, while also highlighting persistent challenges such as insecurity in schools, inadequate infrastructure, unaffordable sanitary products, teenage pregnancies, domestic violence, and poverty all of which continue to undermine children's full enjoyment of their rights.

73. She also informed of her engagement in the Pan-African Adolescent Movement, where more than 1,700 adolescents recently gathered to reflect on laws, policies, and their aspirations under the theme "LEVEL UP." She called on relevant stakeholders and the ACERWC to act with urgency to eliminate harmful practices, strengthen education and justice systems, improve mental health services, expand skills and leadership opportunities, and create safe, supportive environments for girls across Africa. She concluded by affirming that investing in children is investing in Africa's future and expressed the readiness of young people to lead, innovate, and build a prosperous continent.

Remarks by Hon Chairperson of the ACERWC

74. Hon. Sabrina Gahar, newly elected Chairperson of the ACERWC, welcomed participants to Maseru and reflected on the transformational significance of the African Children's Charter since its adoption 35 years ago. She underscored that the Charter remains the only regional child-rights instrument crafted specifically for African realities that includes prohibiting child marriage, banning the recruitment of children in conflict, extending protection to internally displaced children, and providing a continental accountability mechanism through its communications procedure. She highlighted notable progress across the continent, including the ratification of the Charter by 51 Member States, strengthened national laws, expanded access to education and health services, improved birth registration, and increased child participation. She further outlined the Committee's monitoring role through State Party reporting, General Comments, and decisions on Communications, all of which continue to drive reform and reinforce accountability.

75. Despite these progress, Hon. Sabrina stressed that significant challenges remain. Poverty, violence, harmful practices, child labour, conflicts, humanitarian crises, climate change, digital risks, and entrenched discrimination particularly affecting girls, children with disabilities, and children without parental care continue to impede the realization of children's rights. Hon. Sabrina called for increased investment, universal

ratification of the Charter, withdrawal of existing reservations, timely reporting, and prioritized budgeting for children. She also highlighted the symposium's key focus areas, including harmful practices, child-friendly urban planning, parliamentary engagement, and the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities, with dedicated sessions led by children themselves. She concluded by urging all Member States and partners to "Reflect, Renew, and Recommit" to placing children at the centre of all policies and actions, expressing confidence that the symposium's outcome will further advance child rights across the continent.

Remarks by Ms. Angela Martins, Acting Director for Social Development, Culture, and Sport, on behalf of Remarks by H.E. Amb. Amma A. Twum-Amoah, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development African Union Commission (Virtual)

76. In her remarks, Ms Angela Martins, underscored that the ACERWC holds profound significance for the African Union and particular importance for the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, given its complementary mandate with the Committee. She noted that the Charter provides a vital framework for Member States to align national legislation, strengthen systems and advance the elimination of harmful traditional practices. While celebrating its binding nature and achievements over the past 35 years, she also stressed the need to recognise the persistent challenges affecting children across the continent.

77. She highlighted that several issues require urgent action for full realization of children rights and welfare. These include the ratification by the four remaining Member State, consistency in state reporting, children affected by armed conflict, child labour, displacement, and systemic discrimination particularly those with disabilities. She affirmed that upholding the Charter is a legal obligation, not an act of charity, and called on Member States to renew their commitment, strengthen alignment with the Charter, and work in the spirit of Ubuntu to ensure every child thrives. She concluded by appreciating the Committee's progress, acknowledging the constructive collaboration to date, and extending best wishes for a productive symposium and a successful 46th Ordinary Session.

Remarks by Ms. Siza Magangoe, Deputy Director General, on behalf of H.E the Minister of Social Development

78. Hon Ms. Siza Magangoe appreciated the invitation for South Africa to participate in the commemoration. On behalf of the Minister, she reaffirmed the country's strong commitment to the ACERWC and that South Africa's child-rights framework is grounded in the Constitution, centred on family-based care, and highlighted that the 2025 Children's Amendment Bill seeks to further strengthen the national child protection system.

79. Hon Ms. Siza further underscored that family strengthening, prevention, and early intervention remain core priorities, supported through close collaboration with local governments. Hon Ms. Siza recalled the country's role in hosting the African Children's Summit with participation from all five regions, where an outcome statement was

adopted, and acknowledged. She concluded by reaffirming South Africa's commitment to implementing the Committee's concluding observations and confirmed that the next periodic report will be submitted in September 2026.

Remarks by H.E. Amb. Ntsiuoa SEKETE, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Lesotho to Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the AU

80. H.E. Ambassador Ntsiuoa Sekete started by thanking all delegates for their presence and extended a warm welcome to Maseru. She celebrated the progress achieved in advancing children's rights across the continent while noting that Africa stands at a crossroads marked by significant achievements as well as persistent challenges. She reaffirmed Lesotho's strong commitment to promoting and protecting children's rights and expressed appreciation to both the outgoing Committee Members and the newly elected Bureau, pledging the Kingdom's continued support.

81. Amb. Ntsiuoa called for genuine engagement with the voices of children and urged Member States to act on the issues they raise. Amb Ntsiuoa highlighted Lesotho's ongoing efforts in areas such as cybersecurity and data protection, the rights of persons with disabilities, and broader child-focused reforms. Stressing that violations against children are not mere statistics but direct assaults on Africa's future, she underscored the indispensable role of the ACERWC in safeguarding accountability. She concluded by noting the importance of Agenda 2063 and 2040's plan and emphasized key priorities, while reaffirming Lesotho's commitment particularly through Her Majesty's championing of food and nutrition initiatives of the AU. In closing, she stressed that Africa cannot achieve Agenda 2063 if it fails its children, and she wished all participants a productive and action-oriented session.

Remarks by H.E. Amb. Willy Nyamitwe, Ambassador of the Republic of Burundi to Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the AU and Chairperson of the Subcommittee of Human Rights, Democracy and Governance

82. H.E. Ambassador Nyamitwe began by acknowledging the dignitaries present and expressing gratitude to the Kingdom of Lesotho for its warm hospitality. Speaking both as a diplomat and a father, he reflected on the universal aspirations of African children to learn, play, and grow in peace and underscored that these aspirations lie at the heart of the continent's collective commitment. He congratulated the newly elected Bureau of the Committee and expressed appreciation to the outgoing members for their exemplary leadership. He recalled the mandate of the PRC Sub-Committee, which serves as the bridge between AU human rights bodies and political organs, ensuring that recommendations translate into concrete decisions, policies, and impact.

83. He highlighted the significance of the 35th anniversary theme with "Reflect, Renew, recommit" as a call to assess progress honestly, recognize persistent challenges, and strengthen collaboration across all states and AU institutions. He reaffirmed the PRC Sub-Committee's deep appreciation for the Committee's broad and increasingly complex work, including State reporting, communications, missions, and direct engagement with children. Stressing the need for adequate resources, he reiterated

the PRC's commitment to supporting the Committee and enhancing coordination within the AGA-APSA framework. Addressing Africa's children directly, he assured them that they are valued, protected, and central to the continent's future. He concluded by urging all actors to close existing gaps and turn the Charter's promises into lived realities for every child, wishing participants productive deliberations over the course of the symposium.

Remarks by H.E. Miguel Bembe, Ambassador of the Republic of Angola to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia & Permanent Representative to the AU, Chairperson of the Permanent Representatives Committee of the AU

84. Ambassador Miguel César Domingos Bembe opened his remarks by honouring the 35th anniversary of the ACERWC, describing it as a continental milestone rooted in Africa's values, history, and aspirations. He expressed appreciation to the Government of Lesotho for its warm hospitality and commended the ACERWC for its leadership and commitment. Reflecting on the Charter's origins, he highlighted its unique African character and called on Member States to "reflect, renew, and reaffirm" their commitments. He stressed that protecting children is central to Africa's human development and a core pillar of Agenda 2063, noting that progress must be assessed alongside persistent challenges including the emerging risks in the digital and climate spheres.

85. Amb. Miguel underscored the responsibility of the AU Permanent Representatives' Committee to strengthen the link between human rights bodies and political organs so that child-rights recommendations translate into concrete policies, budgets, and action. Highlighting Angola's own experience—including regular reporting under Article 43, strong child-protection laws, and national programmes aligned with the Charter. He further emphasized that meaningful implementation requires political will, adequate resources, and robust cooperation. Addressing children directly, he affirmed that they are the purpose of the Charter and that Africa believes in their potential. He concluded by recommending strategic priorities such as digital-child-protection standards, child-friendly urbanization, climate-responsive policies, stronger data systems, and African solidarity financing, before formally calling for renewed determination to build an Africa that places children at the centre of its future.

Statement by Hon. Mphuthi Mphuthi, Minister of Public Service on behalf of Hon. Pitso Lesaona, Minister of Gender, Youth, and Social Development, Kingdom of Lesotho

86. Hon. Mphuthi started his statement by extending warm welcome to the participants to the Kingdom of Lesotho and noted that the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the African Children's Charter reflects Africa's unwavering commitment to protecting and empowering its children. He highlighted that the Charter stands as a beacon of hope for every child and a testament to Africa's resolve to build a just and prosperous continent. Over the past 35 years, Africa has made remarkable progress that includes expanding free primary education, reducing child mortality, harmonizing domestic laws with regional standards, and embedding the principle that children's rights are non-negotiable. He further underscored the growing role of children's voices in shaping policies that directly affect their lives.

87. Hon. Mphuthi stressed that serious challenges persist. Inequality, poverty, HIV and AIDS, violence against children, child labour, and early and forced marriage continue to negatively impact millions of children. He affirmed Lesotho's strong commitment to child protection, citing national reforms, the establishment of a toll-free child helpline, decentralised child-friendly courts, the Child and Gender Protection Unit within the Police Service, and expanded access to secondary education. He emphasized that the Charter must not remain a document on paper but a lived reality for Africa's children. He concluded by calling for collective renewal of commitment across African States and stakeholders, urging everyone to deliver tangible transformation ensuring safety, protection, and solidarity for all children and He closed his remarks with the words "Khotso, Pula, Nala," a phrase that conveys a heartfelt wish for peace, blessings, and prosperity. He then officially declare the symposium open.

Awards and Acknowledgments for Committee Members and Outstanding Contributions

88. Recognition and certificates were presented to Committee members whose terms are ending, as well as to Madam CISSE Mariama Mohamed in appreciation of her outstanding contribution as a former Executive Secretary of the Committee and her dedication to children's rights.

ITEM 14 : Keynote address on Advancing the AU theme of the year through a child-rights lens, by Amb. Amr Aljowaily, Director of CIDO

89. Ambassador Amr Aljowaily, Director of the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) of the African Union Commission, delivered a keynote address during the Symposium commemorating the 35th Anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). In his remarks, he underscored the significance of aligning the 2025 African Union Theme of the Year, Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations, with the rights and welfare of children. He emphasized that the Charter's 35th anniversary is not only a celebration of Africa's visionary child-rights framework but also a moment to reflect on how historical injustices; colonialism, enslavement, apartheid, and structural racism; continue to shape the lived realities of children on the continent and in the diaspora. The Ambassador highlighted those reparations, as framed in AU Assembly Decision 884(XXXVII), must be understood through the eyes of children who still bear the intergenerational impacts of exclusion and inequality.

90. He stressed that the ACRWC offers a critical continental lens for interpreting the AU Theme of the Year, given its grounding in African socio-cultural contexts and its institutional architecture, including the ACERWC, which provides standards, accountability, and advocacy. Ambassador Aljowaily identified three core dimensions of reparatory justice from a child-rights perspective: restorative measures, including healing for communities affected by colonial-era harms; redistributive measures that advance the right to development through equitable access to education, health care, social protection, nutrition, and digital connectivity; and transformative narratives that affirm the dignity and cultural identity of African and Afro-descendant children,

including the restitution of stolen cultural heritage. He further noted ongoing continental and global processes such as the Africa–CARICOM Summit and the upcoming hosting of the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (UNPFPAD) at the AU Headquarters, as key platforms for embedding child-centred approaches to justice and reparations.

91. In closing, Ambassador Aljowaily made five specific calls for action to advance the AU Theme of the Year through a child-rights lens. He called for:

- ✓ ACERWC’s participation in the Ninth Pan-African Congress to ensure that the child perspective informs deliberations on Pan-Africanism and multilateral reforms.
- ✓ A virtual meeting between ACERWC, AU Committee of Experts on Reparation and AU Legal Experts on Reparation to jointly develop a 10-year child-centred workplan, given proposals to extend the Theme of the Year into a Theme of the Decade.
- ✓ A Working Group on links between children of Africa and the Caribbean, building on the AU–CARICOM MoU;
- ✓ Joint activities to popularize the new UNESCO encyclopaedic volumes “African Diaspora” and “Global Africa Today,” including their child-friendly digital game to strengthen identity and cultural pride; and
- ✓ An ACERWC-led session during the upcoming UNPFPAD meeting at the AU, dedicated to elevating the African child’s perspective in global dialogues.

ITEM 15 : Child led session: Children’s Voices-Reflections on children’s rights: trends, progress and challenges.

92. Children from across the continent convened and led a dedicated child-driven session aimed at amplifying their lived experiences, priorities and aspirations at the 35th Anniversary celebrations of the ACRWC. Moderated by Miss. Rethabile Mothibeli from Lesotho and Master. Luke Chimbuchi Okeke from Nigeria, the session created an important platform for children to reflect on the implementation of the ACRWC, discuss trends and progress in realising their rights, and identify remaining challenges. Opening the session, Ms. Rethabile, aged 14, welcomed participants and outlined that the purpose of this dialogue was to ensure that the commemoration is grounded in children’s realities. She stressed that the session allowed children to highlight both achievements and persisting challenges, and those presenting recommendations directly to governments, the Committee and other stakeholders is a crucial step in ensuring meaningful participation. She encouraged all attendees to “listen, learn and take action.”

93. In reflecting on positive developments, Zahra Abdelkerim, a child parliamentarian from Chad, emphasised the transformative impact of recognising children’s right to participation and non-discrimination. She noted that despite her young age and status as a girl, the Charter has enabled her voice to be meaningfully heard. Zahra highlighted that the participation of girls in decision-making is not only a right but a powerful driver of social progress, bringing fresh perspectives, courage and lived understanding of community challenges. She stressed that every girl who speaks up “opens doors for thousands of others,” adding that empowering girls strengthens equality, justice and sustainable development. Zahra concluded by affirming that girls

are not merely leaders of tomorrow, but leaders of today, fully capable of contributing to building their countries and continent.

94. From Lesotho, Nthati Makama, a 16-year-old from SOS Children's Village, outlined several advancements aligned with the Charter. She reported significant progress in the realisation of the right to identity, noting that birth registration services have been expanded and decentralised to hospitals and community councils, enabling immediate registration of newborns and reducing the burden on parents. She further highlighted improvements in the right to education, including the provision of free primary schooling, increasing access to secondary education and the continuous recruitment of teachers. Referring to Article 21, she underscored efforts to address harmful cultural practices, mentioning campaigns against early and childhood marriage and initiatives to regulate initiation practices. She also noted key legislative and policy achievements, including the Disability Equity Act of 2021, the provision of disability grants for children with disabilities, amendments underway to strengthen the Children's Protection and Welfare Act, and the establishment of a 24-hour child helpline. Makama further commended the annual Children's Parliament, which offers a direct channel for meaningful engagement with government authorities. She acknowledged the African Committee of Experts for its continued guidance but stressed that despite progress, much more remains to be done to fully realise children's rights in Lesotho.

95. Representing Uganda, Kabuyo Sania, aged 16, reflected on progress achieved in education and participation. She noted the introduction of digital learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, which enabled continuity of learning through Zoom lessons and later contributed to technological improvements in schools, such as the installation of educational television systems, computer laboratories and internet access. However, she also pointed out the persistent inequalities in access to technology, as many children and schools lacked the necessary gadgets or connectivity. She discussed policy measures introduced to support pregnant learners by allowing them to sit examinations, though she observed that implementation remains inconsistent, with some schools imposing restrictive or discriminatory conditions. On child participation, she explained that children are increasingly able to elect their school leaders, which provides an avenue for expressing their views. Nonetheless, she highlighted that children's input is not always taken seriously by school administrations.

96. Following commending the children panelists for their reflections, the co-moderator, **Luke Chimbuchi Okeke child from Nigeria**, invited children to reflect on the continuing difficulties they face in their communities, countries, and across the continent as well as the barriers that persist despite progress under the African Children's Charter.

97. From Kenya, **Pascalina Akoth, aged 17**, highlighted significant challenges in her community, beginning with limited access to education. She explained that many children are unable to attend school because their families cannot afford school fees. She further noted that access to healthcare remains inadequate, as children often do not receive essential medication or vaccinations, particularly if they are not registered under the local medical schemes. Pascalina also discussed the continuing rise in teenage pregnancies, attributing this in part to the lack of sanitary towels, which leads to absenteeism and school dropout. She additionally underscored the persistence of child mortality linked to poor nutrition and food insecurity, stating that many parents do not have the means to provide adequate meals for their children. Another child from Kenya, **Bibi Salim**, reinforced Pascalina's concerns and added that school dropout

rates remain high due to preventable factors such as lack of menstrual hygiene products. She expressed concern about girls being coerced into sexual relationships by adults in their communities, which she linked to inadequate parental care and poverty. Bibi also emphasized the issue of child labour, explaining that many families force their children to work at a very young age so they can contribute to household income, undermining their right to education and development.

98. From Cameroon, **Alang Kelly Aristile, aged 17**, provided a broader overview of the multiple, interlinked challenges children face in his country, especially in conflict-affected areas. He described widespread malnutrition among children under five, as well as increased exposure to malaria and diarrheal diseases driven by climate change, drought and water scarcity. He noted that vaccination coverage remains incomplete for many children. In education, he highlighted limited access to schools, poor infrastructure, and the inability of families to afford basic school supplies. He also pointed out stark gender disparities, with girls often pushed into domestic work. Alang further explained that ongoing crises in the Northwest and Southwest regions have resulted in prolonged school closures, heightened risks of child recruitment by armed groups, and made travel to school dangerous, with children facing threats of kidnapping or violence. He added that children in these regions also experience intense psychosocial trauma, displacement, and insecurity. Additionally, he mentioned concerns related to irresponsible or unsafe use of artificial intelligence, which he felt exposes children to harmful behaviour and exploitation online.

99. From Nigeria, **Wisdom Ugbede Achanya, aged 15**, reflected on what he has learned from participating in child-rights work in his country. He reaffirmed that Nigerian law contains strong provisions on child protection but pointed out that substantial gaps remain in practice. He emphasized that many children continue to experience child labour, poor access to healthcare, early marriage, insecurity in their communities, various forms of abuse and neglect, and unequal access to quality education. Wisdom stressed that these challenges persist despite improvements and called for stronger efforts to ensure that the rights guaranteed under the African Children's Charter are realised for all children.

100. Following, the young delegates presented a set of recommendations directed to governments, the ACERWC, partners and other stakeholders. Their proposals reflected their lived realities and aspirations for a continent where the African Children's Charter is fully realised.

- ✓ Member States be required to guarantee effective and structured child participation in all decision-making processes that concern them. children, be included as members of the African Committee of Experts
- ✓ Governments and the ACERWC to amplify children's voices in all national budget and policy discussions, to increase investments in education, health and safe public spaces, and to strengthen the enforcement of laws protecting children from violence, child marriage and discrimination.
- ✓ Called for measures to reduce digital inequality by providing computers to schools, lowering internet costs and ensuring equitable access to technology-based learning.
- ✓ Committee to strengthen guidance on pregnant girls' access to examinations and schooling, noting that harmful practices persist at school levels.
- ✓ Children be provided with safe spaces to express their views freely and meaningfully and called for the ACERWC to establish representatives in different countries to monitor the implementation of decisions on the ground.

- ✓ Governments to fully implement laws prohibiting accusations of witchcraft and all harmful traditional practices.
- ✓ End all forms of corporal punishment, both at school and in the home, and to fully enforce laws against child labour and economic exploitation.

ITEM 16 : Panel I: Harmful Practices & Violence against Children

101. Moderator- Hon Aver Gavar, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Children opened the session by recalling that harmful practices and violence against children continue to undermine the guiding principles of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. She highlighted the Committee's normative documents, including Joint General Comments with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on Ending Child Marriage and on Female Genital Mutilation, as well as the ACERWC Guidelines on Violence Against Children. She also noted the recent adoption of the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and the ongoing Tripartite Analytical Study with the African Commission and the African Court on the challenges of litigating women's and girls' rights. While acknowledging regional and national progress, she stressed that systemic barriers mean that laws alone are not sufficient. She invited participants to engage openly and learn from survivors and experts to identify what is working and what can be scaled up.

102. Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing-ACEWRC Special Rapporteur on Child marriage and other harmful practices described the current response to harmful practices as complex, given measurable progress alongside deeply entrenched challenges. She noted expanding political will and legal reforms across different countries, such as Sudan's criminalisation of FGM in 2020, Zimbabwe's 2022 Marriage Act setting 18 as the minimum age of marriage, and Sierra Leone's 2024 Prohibition of Child Marriage Act. At the same time, harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage remain pervasive, sustained by social norms, economic vulnerability and gender inequality. Enforcement mechanisms are often weak, and exceptions under customary and religious law undermine legal protections. She stressed that the most meaningful shifts are happening at the community level, through active engagement of religious and traditional leaders, growing youth leadership and the visibility of survivors. She gave examples such as Chief Theresa Kachindamoto's role in annulling child marriages in Malawi, youth-led initiatives in Zimbabwe, Women and Girls Friendly Spaces in Ethiopia, and youth advocacy and strategic litigation in Malawi that helped raise the minimum age of marriage to 18.

103. Mr Ali Andrew Madugu- Director, Child Development Department, Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs, Nigeria explained how Nigeria's decision to cost its National Action Plan brought tangible change in addressing violence against children and harmful practices. With support from UNICEF and other stakeholders, the government developed a costed plan, but the turning point was securing political buy-in from the highest levels of the political structure, including the President and Vice President. Once the Presidency understood what the costing meant and how it would be operationalised, funds were released even where budget lines had not previously existed. This made it easier to implement and enforce laws and policies, to apprehend perpetrators, to prosecute them and to send them to jail, leading to a shift in the level of violence against children. He noted that the costed Plan also increased awareness

and engagement among children, families and communities, and strengthened gender responsiveness. As people realised that the government was serious and implementing a costed plan, community leaders, religious leaders and others became more interested and involved. The government also deliberately included economic empowerment for selected vulnerable families, recognising the link between economic burdens and violence against children, and this contributed to reducing violence. A central coordination mechanism was established under the Office of the Vice-President, bringing together several ministries, development partners, NGOs and CSOs. Nigeria is now working towards a pooled fund, managed by trustees rather than solely state actors, to ensure accountability and protect resources dedicated to the Plan.

104. Susan Hang'andu (Survivor), Zambia explained that children often do not speak up about violence because they fear they will not be believed, or they expect adults to minimise their experiences, blame them or say they are exaggerating. Threats, intimidation and loyalty to the abuser can further prevent disclosure, especially when the abuser is someone they love or depend on. She added that many children simply do not know where to go for help, what services exist, or how to report safely. Harmful social norms and stigma also play a role, particularly in communities where children are taught to keep 'family matters' inside the home, where girls are blamed, and boys are labelled weak. Limited trust in systems, especially when children see cases ignored or mishandled, leads them to doubt that reporting will bring protection. She said safer environments require safe and trusted adults and open communication. Children need to know there are teachers, community workers, faith leaders and others who will listen without judgment and act to protect them. Empowering children with knowledge about what violence is, that it is never their fault, and where and how to seek help makes them much harder to silence. Communities must move from silence and victim-blaming towards clear norms against violence and strong accountability. Finally, effective coordination among health workers, social workers, welfare services and police is needed so that once a child reports, the whole system protects them. She concluded that children are not silent because they want to hide, but because we have not yet created environments safe enough for their voices.

105. Loveness Mudzuru, a survivor from Zimbabwe, introduced herself as a survivor, advocate, researcher and community organiser, and stressed that for survivors, leadership begins the moment they recognise the silence around violence, the lack of support and the absence of safe spaces, and realise that no one is coming to fix it for them. She created Passionate Circles Trust, a grassroots organisation supporting children born from child marriages through mentorship, education, creative expression and intergenerational communication. She reflected on her case against the government of Zimbabwe, *Mudzuru v. Ministry of Justice*, which helped raise the legal marriage age to 18. She argued that lived experience is expertise and should be recognised, credited and paid for on an equal footing with technical or academic expertise. She gave the example of the Women of the South Speak Out Fellowship, where flexible funding allowed her and other survivors to work with a traditional leader to develop a Traditional Leaders' Guide on ending child marriage and gender-based violence. This showed that when survivors are trusted with resources, not only travel to conferences, but they can also deliver practical, community-owned solutions. She stressed that meaningful survivor leadership requires institutions to recognise survivor

expertise, provide flexible and long-term funding, and ensure trauma-informed and safeguarding-compliant systems. Survivors must have control over if, when and how their stories are used, with informed and reversible consent. They should also be involved in monitoring, accountability, feedback and complaints mechanisms. She concluded that survivors do not need sympathy but collaboration that shifts power and shares resources, placing survivors beside institutions as equal partners and co-creators of systems, not as symbolic add-ons.

106. Sally Ncube, Representative for Southern Africa, Equality Now reflected that even in countries that have outlawed child marriage, common loopholes in laws still allow marriage under 18 through parental or judicial consent or via customary and religious exemptions. Many legal frameworks do not provide comprehensive prevention and redress. Moreover, prosecution rates are low, police are reluctant to intervene in 'family matters', and customary or religious courts often override national laws, especially in rural areas. On FGM, she pointed out that some high-prevalence countries still lack specific anti-FGM laws, and resistance to such laws is hardening in some contexts. Social norms and community pressure often outweigh formal law as girls fear shaming their families or being ostracised, and FGM and child marriage are framed as necessary for purity, honour, marriageability or economic survival. Many girls do not know that these practices are illegal or where to seek help, and they lack access to shelters, hotlines, transport and services. Economic vulnerability further entrenches these practices, as families depend on bride price or see early marriage as a way to reduce financial burdens. She then outlined actions needed to bridge the gap between law and lived experience, including harmonising national, customary and religious laws with the Charter and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). She called for empowering girls with information, participation opportunities, and economic alternatives, including through education, scholarships, cash transfers and support for girl-led organisations. She emphasized the need for strengthened, well-resourced, multi-sectoral coordination, the importance of data collection and regular reporting to the ACERWC, and adequate budget allocation. Finally, she underlined the need for community-driven change through the engagement of traditional and religious leaders, intergenerational dialogues, the promotion of girls' education, locally led campaigns, and strong survivor-centred services. She concluded that the Charter at 35 requires more than the existence of laws: it demands implementation, accountability and investment so that the law becomes a real shield for every child.

ITEM 17 : Panel II: Planning and Budgeting for Children

107. The session was moderated by Ms Nankali Maksud, Regional Child Protection Advisor for Eastern and Southern Africa, who has forwarded various questions to the panellists.

108. While opening the panel, Ms. Nankali Maksud presented data showing that 130 million children are married before the age of 18, 79 million children experience sexual assault, and 87 million children are engaged in child labour, among other alarming indicators of violence and rights violations. She emphasized that these figures demonstrate an urgent need for stronger, coordinated efforts to safeguard the rights and welfare of children in Africa by which Planning and Budgeting for Children should be priority to come first.

109. Margaret Irving Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF ESARO presented on “Working Towards a Focused Agenda for Elevating Planning, Financing, and Delivery in Child Protection”. Her presentation, “Everyone’s Responsibility, No One’s Budget,” highlighted the stark gap between strong political commitments to child protection and the extremely low financing dedicated to it—only 0.2% of visible public spending in Sub-Saharan Africa. She stressed that although child protection is central to children’s wellbeing, planning and budgeting institutions remain insufficiently engaged, resulting in weak execution, fragmented accountability, and limited visibility. Irving noted that child protection often sits in isolated line ministries despite its multisectoral nature, creating a disconnect between regional commitments and implementation. She identified four priorities for change visibility, credibility, evidence and costing, and coordination and emphasized the value of a continental benchmark to anchor planning, strengthen accountability, enhance coordination, and ensure fiscal realism. She concluded by urging a shift from political commitments to tangible implementation.

110. Hon. Wilson highlighted that while several countries have begun integrating child priorities into national plans and increasing investments in sectors such as education, health and social protection, significant gaps remain due to limited fiscal space, low prioritization of children in budgets, weak execution, inadequate data and difficulties in tracking spending and impact. He noted that recent shocks from COVID-19 to conflict and climate pressures exposed the fragility of child-related budgets, and that meaningful child participation in planning processes is still rare. He explained that a continental benchmark on minimum service capacity or budget effort would help address these challenges by creating a clear and comparable standard for assessment, enabling more precise guidance, strengthening accountability, recognizing good practice, and allowing the Committee to engage with Member States more consistently and effectively as they work to ensure sustainable investment in children.

111. Mr. Geoffrey Samson Chimwala, Deputy Director of Planning and Research in Malawi’s Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, noted that many child-rights activities have long depended on partner organizations, which has affected sustainability, and that only 0.01% of the national budget is allocated to child protection for 2025 in Malawi largely because the country has lacked a benchmark to justify stronger budget submissions, underscoring the value of the benchmarks. He further pointed to limited coordination as a persistent challenge, though the establishment of a National Children’s Commission is helping strengthen oversight. While national plans exist, he emphasized that inadequate human capacity continues to hinder implementation. However, he expressed optimism, explaining that the government is increasingly engaging regional councils and has created directorates at that level steps that signal growing institutional commitment and the potential for district-level systems to improve with the right support.

112. Mrs. Viviane Kanga Kossa, Director of Social Action at the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection of Côte d’Ivoire, explained that although funding remains limited, the government has established a multisectoral committee to strengthen planning, supported by constitutional commitments to social protection and the fight against violence. She emphasized that political will plays a critical role in

influencing budget negotiations and highlighted the need for clear standards, defined service packages, and adequate human resource capacity to support vulnerable children. While several challenges persist, she noted that the ministry has performance indicators that demonstrate results and impact, providing a basis for stronger budget advocacy. She stressed the importance of sustained dialogue with the Ministry of Finance and underscored that investment in social protection particularly for children is an investment in long-term human capital and national development.

113. Dr. Joan Nyanyuki, Executive Director of the African Child Policy Forum, began her presentation by acknowledging the progress made across the continent, noting that legal frameworks have strengthened and social protection systems are expanding in more than 30 African countries. She mentioned that political attitudes are gradually shifting in a positive direction, with governments increasingly recognizing the multifaceted nature of child protection and the need for integrated responses. Dr. Joan emphasized that sustained progress requires coordinated action by all stakeholders, supported by strong continental frameworks, greater visibility of child protection issues, and the inclusion of child-sensitive indicators in national plans. She reminded that while many AU initiatives exist, they remain poorly known among practitioners and must be consolidated and anchored more effectively. She highlighted the importance of multi-track investment and collaboration between civil society and various sectors, stressing that without capturing and analyzing budget data, accountability is weakened. Benchmarks, she explained, are essential tools for strengthening government accountability, while civil society can contribute by collecting data, developing templates, and demonstrating evidence on gaps and progress. Finally, she underscored the need to build the capacity of civil society organizations so that they are better equipped to generate analysis, monitor policy implementation, and support governments with reliable data.

114. Nthati Makama, a child advocate from Lesotho, stressed that governments must meaningfully consult children in budgeting processes so their priorities are reflected in child protection and welfare programmes. She emphasized the importance of having dedicated budget lines for child protection, more social workers in schools calling on the Government of Lesotho to invest in this and stronger child-sensitive policies. Nthati also highlighted challenges with child helplines, which sometimes respond slowly, especially in rural areas, and underscored the need to improve infrastructure and ensure access to essential items such as sanitary pads for girls. For young people to trust government commitments, she explained, they need to see real improvements on the ground: timely services, visible support, reliable protection systems, and concrete actions that make children feel safe, valued and supported.

115. After the panel interventions, the floor was opened to the public, where participants strongly reaffirmed the importance of establishing a continental benchmark for child protection financing one that can be adapted to national contexts. Delegates highlighted the need for clear action plans that coherently link planning, budgeting, and implementation, and explored the types of support and practical arrangements required to ensure that any benchmark aligns with national capacities and realities.

ITEM 18 : Panel III: The Role of Parliamentarians in upholding the rights of children

116. The Panel was moderated by **H.E. Amb Willy Nyamitwe**. H.E Ambassador Nyamitwe welcomed participants to the panel discussion, highlighting its purpose and objectives.

117. Dr Ndidi Abanna, Ag Head of Committees, Documentation, Research and Library, PAP, introduced the Pan African Parliament and outlined its mandate within the African Union framework as advisory and oversight by engaging with Members of Parliaments of Member States. She outlined the role of PAP in mainstreaming the provisions of the African Children's Charter by developing legal frameworks that contribute to child protection. She referenced the Model law of food security and nutrition, migration, access to citizenship and education and protection from discrimination which have been impactful in children's social development, and especially children with disabilities and girls as well as a draft Model law on implementation of decisions of African human rights mechanism by Members states that sets to set a standard framework to institutionalize the implementation of such decisions expeditiously. She further expressed the importance of budget allocation for child protection and infrastructure. As this is an opportunity for parliamentarians to consider effective utilisation of their funds especially in the justice sector and policy development.

118. Hon. 'Mamokete Ntshkhe, Member of Parliament, National Assembly of Lesotho, stated that Parliament plays role of oversight, budgeting, law making, and representation of their constituencies, and that the Parliament of Lesotho has made strides in enacting laws, policies and strategies for child protection and development. She stated that Lesotho's Children and Protection and Welfare Act of 2011 was amended in 2023 for improved social protection, in particular regarding adoption and child labour. The Ministry of Gender, Youth Sports and Recreation and Social Development, in partnership with World Vision Lesotho and UNICEF has launched a National Child Protection System which is a safety and reporting pathway to protect children from abuse and neglect. Further, she stated that the Government of Lesotho has collaborated with the European Union delegation in Lesotho and UNICEF for the Ntlafatsa Bana Initiative that links children with services grants for nutrition. Additionally, the government enacted the Education Act of 2010 for access to education for all children. Challenges are on universal access and sight visits have been undertaken to evaluate access and ensure children are enrolled especially in rural areas. Computer crime and cybersecurity bill, 2023 is yet to be passed that offers protection from online exploitation for children.

119. Samuel Norgah, Director AU Liaison Office, World Vision International reflected on the 2018 report's country index. Countries with the best index are those with the best child protection and have ratified different human rights treaties and protocols. There are over 7 protocols including: Persons with Disabilities, cross border cooperation, protection of Internally Displaced Persons, Data Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls, which contribute to strong national frameworks. These affect the role that the parliaments play in strengthening children protection in their domestic frameworks. Budget allocation, reporting mechanisms, and CSO engagement are strategies Parliamentarians need to consider in their implementation.

Child parliaments are other mechanism that play a role in advocacy for children's rights protection and prevention of issues like prevention of child marriage and FGM. Lesotho, Botswana, RSA, Cameroon are good examples of State Parties with a good index on child protection as they spend about 5.5% of GDP on social welfare programmes and initiatives such as school feeding programs

120. Prof Nkatha Murungi- Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria began her remarks by highlighting that there was a trend of regressive legislative efforts that were undermining children's rights and demonstrated a disconnect between adult legislators and children's legislators. Prof. Murungi shared that the major challenge that occurred in Africa was that laws were not passed by parliament but rather through parliament. Her recommendations were to increase transparency, through publication of parliamentary Hansards to ascertain how much legislatures are committed to child protection. She also recommended for more prominent interaction between children's parliaments and adult parliaments, emphasizing that children's matters be integral to the political agenda of a country.

121. Papasian Ndeye Saphira a girl parliamentarian from Chad and Chauntelle Loapi Onneile, a Girl parliamentarian from Botswana spoke about past initiatives of the parliament such as raising awareness on child protection, launching local support programs, and convincing communities that children's voices actually matter. She reflected on her mandate to represent her peers, identify challenges they faced, and work with communities and authorities to bring meaningful change. Limited resources, gaps in awareness in some communities, and the huge need for stronger collaboration with decision-makers were some challenges, she identified. Miss Saphira made key recommendations, including but not limited to expansion of outreach programs, strengthening partnerships with local and national leaders, and ensuring that every child in Chad and in Africa has access to his or her rights.

122. Chauntelle Loapi Onneile, Girl Parliamentarian from Botswana shared some of the achievements that the Children's Parliament in her country had achieved. She submitted that the Parliament has adopted a child friendly children's act. She said that there had to be inclusivity for Children to be empowered, calling for stronger consultation of the children's parliament by the adult parliament. She called for stronger follow up and implementation, to ensure that children are not only heard but taken seriously by legislators. She also recommended that the Children's legislature also receive more visibility to ensure that as many children are aware of the institution and its work. Finally, she demanded a gendered approach to children's rights, recognising the disproportionate effects of abuse on girls.

123. Liekolo Montsi, Girl Parliamentarian from Lesotho delivered the outcome statement of the Girls Parliamentarians for Botswana, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Mauritania and Uganda who attended the Girl Parliamentarians Training .The training was on Effective Participation of Girl Parliamentarians in Decision Making, held on 25 November .She reaffirmed that the Children's parliaments affirm that children have the ability to address their problems. She mentioned issues affecting children and especially girls including young girls being expelled from school for falling pregnant , inability to access Sexual Reproductive Health in health facilities, child trafficking, access to quality education, period dignity and reform of juvenile institutions and the justice system to accommodate girls among others. Miss Liekolo called for State

parties to adopt harsher punishments for paedophiles and prohibit the expulsion of pregnant learners. She finally made a call to governments of member states to enact laws that recognise child parliaments as legitimated entities that offer valid contributions to decision making on child issues and that such contribution should be implemented within a reasonable time.

ITEM 19 : Panel IV: Children with intellectual disabilities: lessons and policy directions

124. The panel was moderated by Prof Nkatha Murungi, External Expert, Working Group on Children with Disabilities of the ACERWC.

Hon. Aboubekrine El Jera, Chairperson of the WG on Children with disabilities- Keynote Address

125. Hon Aboubekrine El Jera, Chairperson of the Working Group on Children with Disabilities, started the panel by underscoring the critical need to acknowledge that children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities often remain in the shadows of policies, on the margins of investments, and neglected in discourses, despite the overarching call to create an Africa that accommodates all its children. He outlined the unique and compounded vulnerabilities faced by children with intellectual disabilities including a heightened risk of experiencing violence in all its forms; forced sterilization and electroconvulsive shocks; extreme barriers to accessing justice, often leading to criminalization instead of receiving supportive healthcare; disproportionate institutionalization, depriving them of family and community life; and bullying and a lack of reasonable accommodation in schools. While noting the robust legal framework for their protection exists including Article 13 of the ACRWC and the African Disability Protocol, Hon El Jera outlined the limited understanding of the specific measures needed to realize these rights. He made a call for a fundamental paradigm shift from invisibility to evidence-based action through disability-inclusive data collection in national censuses and surveys; transition from stigma to dignity and participation through nationwide awareness campaigns; a shift from segregation to genuine inclusion by promoting family and community-based care over institutionalization. He emphasized on the need for adequate national budgets for early childhood diagnosis, assistive technologies, and caregiver support. Most critically, the need for legislative measures to recognize their legal capacity through supported decision-making approaches was amplified. A final call was made for all stakeholders to integrate these priorities into their respective mandates to ensure no child is left behind.

126. Dr Admark Moyo, External Expert within the Working Group, emphasized that children with intellectual disabilities are entitled to all rights under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the African Disability Protocol. He highlighted the low public awareness and persistent harmful beliefs that frame intellectual disability as a curse or shame, alongside widespread discrimination, weak child participation, and poor legal implementation. He stressed that inclusive education must ensure meaningful and equitable learning outcomes, noting that an estimated 86.5% of children with disabilities are out of school in parts of Africa. Dr Moyo underscored the need for adequate services, nutrition, and infrastructure to support children's development areas that remain severely

underfunded and called for stronger family and community engagement through training, vocational support, and empowerment initiatives. He concluded by urging expanded investment in protection, social inclusion, and community participation to fully realize the rights of children with intellectual disabilities.

127. Ms. Sarah Mabasa, Deputy Director in South Africa's Department of Social Development, outlined the country's efforts and remaining challenges in advancing the rights of children with intellectual disabilities. She mentioned that South Africa's Constitution and other subsidiary acts guarantee non-discrimination and equal rights, including access to education, health, and social services for all children, yet children with disabilities continue to face exclusion in schooling, limited accessibility, stigma, shame and social exclusion. She highlighted South Africa's legal and policy frameworks integrate disability considerations across sectors, strengthen dignity, enable active participation, and provide support to caregivers for children with disabilities. She described some of the key measures that the South African Government is taking such as inclusive education through full-service and special schools in some exception situation, early childhood development services, transport support, social protection and income-support programmes, community awareness initiatives, research and oversight mechanisms, capacity-building for practitioners who supports children with disabilities, and the availability of day-care, residential care, family support, parenting programmes, and child-and-youth-care centres. She concluded by acknowledging that despite progress, significant work remains in the areas of awareness-raising, caregiver empowerment, strengthened home-visitation and parenting programmes for children with disabilities that includes intellectual disabilities, enhanced collaboration with CSOs, meaningful participation, and increased budgeting for disability-inclusive services. She concluded by noting the importance of supporting caregivers of children with intellectual disabilities.

128. Ms Fatma **Wangare, Representative of Inclusion Africa**, stated that although an estimated 16.8 million such children with intellectual disabilities live in Africa, they continue to experience deep stigma, exclusion, cultural misconceptions, weak policy implementation, and multiple barriers to education, including the lack of adaptive learning materials, inaccessible infrastructure, difficulties in adoption processes for children with disabilities, and insufficiently trained teachers. Drawing from her personal experience as a parent of a daughter with an intellectual disability, she illustrated the struggles families face in securing inclusive educational environments and social services. She further underscored extreme violations such as infanticide, concealment of children, bullying, and widespread societal shame by which some of the challenges are intensified in rural areas due to poverty and limited services. Despite the widespread ratification of key regional instruments like the African Disability Protocol, she stressed that implementation remains fragmented and that discriminatory laws and practices persist. She called on Member States to form a strong, united movement to protect, respect, and fulfil the rights of children with intellectual disabilities, urging governments to invest in reliable data, operationalize existing regional frameworks, and adopt approaches grounded in rights rather than charity.

Documentary and Video Testimony

129. The Panel Discussion also included video testimony of Immaculate Wanjiru a 17-year-old child with intellectual disability from Kenya. Immaculate changed many

schools including special schools, as they did not cater for her needs. She expressed that she wants to be supported to attend college and receive training so that she can fulfil her dream of owning her own business. In addition, video testimonies of caregivers of children with intellectual disabilities namely Carolyn Muthikwa, mother of Prudence who is a 12-year-old child with down syndrome and Moses Orangi, father of Issac who is 11 years old child with down syndrome. The Parents explained that their children face discrimination and stigma from relatives, neighbours, peers, and schools. They are beaten, isolated and bullied. The parents indicated that it has become burdensome to send their children to school, hence, Prudence is out of school. Moreover, their work is also affected because of societal attitudes towards having the children in their business. The stigma extends to the parents as often the cases of intellectual disabilities are linked with witchcraft due to lack of awareness. They noted that there is no focus on intellectual disability by the Government compared to other disabilities. Hence, they called for support, acceptance, and inclusion of their children.

130. Following the presentations, participants thanked the Committee and the panelists for the Panel, underscoring the importance of experience-sharing among stakeholders and calling for stronger partnerships among States. The State of Libya shared its experience of establishing early childhood education for children within intellectual disabilities and children with autism. The Peoples' Democratic Republic of Algeria also noted that it has adopted the 2025 Disability Protection Act, appointed a commissioner to coordinate disability issues, and established 236 specialized institutions to support children with disabilities as an important step forward in addressing these concerns. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania shared the ongoing efforts in the country on accurate statistics for effective policymaking and reiterated that the Mauritanian Constitution includes provisions guaranteeing the protection of children with disabilities. Moreover, during the discussion the issues reiterated and emphasized include: the importance of prevention and proactive measures; greater recognition and awareness; stronger social protection measures; increased budgeting for interventions for children with intellectual disabilities; and advocacy for AU-level champion for children with disabilities.

131. In conclusion, Prof Murungi informed that the Working Group on Children with Disabilities believes that the discussion needs to continue and, hence, a draft resolution on children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities is proposed for adoption by the Committee, with the aim of mobilizing States, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to take stronger action for children with intellectual disabilities.

ITEM 20 : Panel V: Child friendly cities- The role of municipalities and children's voices

132. The Panel was moderated by Honourable Sabrina Gahar, who underscored the importance of advancing child-friendly urban spaces across the continent. The Acting Executive Secretary, Dr Ayalew Getachew Assefa, provided the background on the development of the Child-Friendly Cities programme. He explained that this initiative, supported by UNICEF, will become an official component of the African Committee's programming from 2026. Dr Ayalew noted that the Committee will work closely with

member states to prioritize the creation of child-friendly cities, drawing on successful models such as Brazil. He highlighted that the current year has served as a brainstorming and preparatory phase ahead of full implementation. Dr Ayalew stressed that the programme will place particular emphasis on vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities. He also urged African states to learn from countries such as Senegal, Cameroon and Gabon, which are making commendable progress in developing child-friendly urban environments. He concluded by thanking UNICEF for its continued support and reaffirmed the Committee's intention to draw inspiration from Brazil's experience.

Video for Child-Friendly Cities

133. A documentary on the initiative was screened. The film illustrated the success of child-friendly cities in Brazil and underscored the importance of creating urban environments that prioritise children's rights and well-being. It noted that since the launch of the programme in 1999, approximately 40% of Brazilian cities have successfully implemented child-friendly city frameworks. The documentary further demonstrated that effective implementation has led to tangible improvements in areas such as immunization coverage, school attendance, and access to healthcare.

Remarks by Sibongile Chitha from Nelson Mandela Children's Fund

134. Sibongile noted that the Child-Friendly Cities programme marks a major step forward in the protection and promotion of children's rights in Africa, as it promises equitable access to essential services such as healthcare, water and sanitation, and education. She stressed that genuinely child-friendly cities must actively engage children in planning and decision-making processes, and that the best interests of the child should guide every aspect of implementation. Sibongile underscored the need to create urban spaces that are particularly safe for the girl child, emphasising that safety is the foundation upon which all child-friendly cities must be built. She urged African governments to place children at the centre of urban design and development. She concluded by expressing the shared vision of Africa's children, a continent where their rights are fully respected, promoted, and protected within the cities they inhabit.

Remarks by Tumisho Komane from Nelson Mandela Children's Fund

135. Thumiso highlighted the numerous challenges African children face in many cities and townships. He noted that drug and alcohol abuse remain urgent issues that must be addressed in the implementation of child-friendly cities. He also pointed out that load shedding is increasingly undermining the right to education, as many learners struggle to study or access the internet for schoolwork and research. Thumiso further observed that overcrowded classrooms are contributing to high dropout rates across the continent. He expressed concern about the continued existence of informal settlements that lack basic services such as water, roads, electricity and sanitation, noting that these conditions undermine the dignity of countless children living in urban areas. He lamented the shortage of ambulances and adequate healthcare facilities, describing this as a serious barrier to the realisation of children's rights. Thumiso emphasised that municipalities and city authorities must work directly with children for child-friendly cities to succeed, affirming that children should be active participants in driving change. He recommended that speed limits be strictly enforced in school zones, as many children still cross busy roads without traffic lights on their way to school. He concluded by stressing that corruption remains the "elephant in the room"

and must be addressed decisively if child-friendly cities are to become a reality in Africa.

136. Following the presentations by Sibongile and Tumisho, the plenary opened for reflections from the floor. Participants emphasised the need to ensure that children living in rural villages are included in the Child-Friendly Cities programme, noting that the majority of African children reside outside urban areas. Concerns were raised about the growing pandemic of drug and substance abuse in schools, highlighting the urgency of integrated prevention and support measures. Several participants noted that each year, many children are unable to sit for examinations because flooding rivers prevent them from reaching their schools, underscoring the need for strengthened infrastructure within child-friendly urban and peri-urban planning. Additional reflections stressed the importance of investing in safe and reliable public transport systems to ensure that children can travel to school without difficulty. There was also a proposal to develop broadcast programmes that raise awareness about children's rights within cities, to ensure communities and stakeholders are well informed as child-friendly initiatives expand.

ITEM 21 : Intergenerational dialogue on Shaping the future: Recommitting to child Rights in a changing Africa

Intergenerational dialogue on shaping the future: Recommitting to child rights in a changing Africa

137. The intergenerational dialogue was moderated by child representatives Sicelo Shalton Maphosa from South Africa and Boitumelo Matlosa from Lesotho. Sicelo opened the discussion by stressing the need to build an Africa where children's rights are not discussed in theory but realised in practice, and that the future of child rights belongs not only to leaders but also to children themselves. Boitumelo introduced the speakers and guided the conversation with questions directed at understanding what has changed for children today compared to previous generations, and what must be done to close implementation gaps that remain 35 years after the adoption of the Charter.

138. Hon Sabrina Gahar, Chairperson of the ACERWC, explained that the most persistent gaps identified by the Committee are not primarily due to a lack of laws or policies, as most Member States have established strong frameworks on paper, but rather due to significant challenges in translating these commitments into practice. She noted weak coordination among institutions responsible for child protection, such as social workers, teachers, justice and health officials, who often work in isolation despite supporting the same children, leading to situations where children fall through systemic gaps. She further highlighted limited capacity at the district and community levels, particularly in rural settings, informal settlements, and areas affected by conflict or displacement, where frontline services remain overstretched and lack adequate tools, training, and staffing. Hon. Sabrina emphasised that children's rights priorities fluctuate with political cycles, emergencies, or leadership transitions, meaning initiatives often weaken or stall when momentum shifts. She also underscored significant challenges with disaggregated data on violations in many Member States, undermining effective planning, budgeting and monitoring. She stressed that

advancing children's rights demands commitment across all sectors and levels of government.

139. Dr Laila Omar Gad, Representative of UNICEF to the AU and UNECA, reflected on how different childhood is today, describing the ease with which young people navigate digital tools as a major opportunity compared to the past. She contrasted this with her generation, which relied on handwritten letters that took weeks for a reply, whereas today's children have instant access to information and global connections. However, she warned that digital spaces also expose children to new forms of harm, particularly manipulation and technology-facilitated violence, and noted the worrying rise in mental health challenges, including what she described as a sense of isolation and silent endurance. Responding to the question on effective models of implementation, she explained that UNICEF's strategy centres on grounded, disaggregated data to identify pockets of deprivation, leveraging public financing for children, strengthening and professionalising the social service workforce, coordinated system-building across ministries, and a whole-of-society approach involving local and national governments, CSOs, private sector, faith-based organisations and parliamentarians. Dr Laila emphasised that today's context is shaped by conflict, climate change, poverty, rapid urbanisation and digital transformation, demanding approaches that are flexible, evidence-based and inclusive.

140. Paulo Kalesi, Director General of the National Children's Institute, Republic of Angola, stressed that one of the most striking differences between his generation and today's is children's right to participate. He recalled that in his culture and childhood, children did not have the right to speak, and that a child who questioned adults was considered naughty or undisciplined. However, today, under the Charter and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children are recognised as having the right to express their views and participate in decisions affecting them. He shared lessons from Angola's implementation of the Charter, and how its adoption accelerated the establishment of child protection institutions and strengthened action against child labour and child marriage, which were once culturally accepted. The Charter has also driven commitments to free education, universal access to health care, and the participation of children. He highlighted the national Children's Parliament, held annually in June, where ministers appear before children who question them directly on what the government is doing for their wellbeing, describing it as an essential space for children to meaningfully participate, express their cultural identities, languages and priorities.

141. Mwila Malama, Senior Child Rights Advocacy Campaigns Advisor, Save the Children, described himself as part of the "bridge generation," born before computers but transitioning rapidly into the digital era. He noted significant improvements in how children experience rights today but stressed that much remains to be done. He commended countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Rwanda for including child-specific commitments within their climate action plans. He also warned of a worrying trend of increasing attacks on education, noting that recorded attacks rose from 719 in 2020 to 2,445 in 2024, amounting to around seven attacks per day. This, he argued, underscores the need for stronger investment in children, calling on governments to allocate more resources to education, health and social protection rather than prioritising debt repayments. He emphasised the importance of mental

health support for children in conflict contexts, stronger accountability through periodic reporting under the Charter and the UNCRC, and prioritisation of children facing inequality and discrimination, particularly those with intellectual disabilities. He concluded by advocating for structured and meaningful child participation, quoting Frederick Douglass: "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men," and Nelson Mandela: "There is no keener revelation of a society's soul than in the way it treats its children."

142. Kgomotso R. Montsho, CSO Forum Representative, reflected that in his generation, children often sat at the door or in the back seat of national conversations, while today's youth increasingly lead engagement. He stressed that while Member States have ratified the Charter and adopted policies, more must be done to transform national and regional commitments into tangible improvements in children's lives. He called for responsive child-governance systems at the sub-national level, operationalising commitments through national strategies translated into community-level action plans, and improved horizontal and vertical coordination to ensure that lived experiences inform reforms. He argued that child rights monitoring and reporting should become a core government function, beginning with situational analyses and state-of-the-child reports from the community level upward, to guide budgeting and development agendas. He emphasised institutionalising child-responsive budgeting and increasing domestic financing, reminding participants that children's needs do not begin or end with donor funds. He urged deliberate dissemination, not just distribution, of policy frameworks, meaning creating collective understanding rather than sending documents by email. He concluded, reiterating that children's rights are everyone's business and affirmed that Africa can and must become a continent that truly places children at the centre.

ITEM 22 : FORUM ON THE STATE PARTY REPORTING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICAN CHILDREN'S CHARTER

143. Mr. Yehualashet Mekonnen, Director African Child Observatory, ACPF expressed gratitude to the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) whose financial support made it possible for the ACPF to contribute towards the organization and success of the State party Reporting Forum. He reiterated that State Party Reporting was one of the universal instruments and procedures to monitor states' compliance with their treaty obligations including the African Children's Charter, but it was not without its challenges. He shared that the ACPF's research suggested that reporting to various treaty bodies both regionally and at international level coupled with lack of sanctions for failure to report had significantly affected the effectiveness of the mechanism. He decried that failure to report disrupts such constructive and mutually beneficial engagements between the ACERWC and State Parties. Mr Mekonnen concluded by stating that ACPF, as a Pan-African child rights organization was ready to support State Parties, as much as its capacity allows, in complying with the reporting obligation.

144. Mr. Chris Muthuri, Deputy Regional Director, Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI) shared that the State Reporting Procedure was not just a technical process concerning deadlines and guidelines but rather a covenant with Africa's children. He submitted that the RWI specifically focused

on increasing the implementation of decisions, judgments, and recommendations from regional human rights bodies across Africa. Mr. Muthuri highlighted that the constraints of coordination, limited technical capacity, and competing national priorities were the biggest challenges to the State Reporting procedure's effectiveness. He shared that the reporting process compelled a review of the whole of Government and created a formal space for NHRIs, CSOs and Children to provide their vital perspectives. He called on State parties to leave the forum with a clear, actionable way forward to improve their reporting profiles for the benefit of the children.

145. The Chairperson Hon. Sabrina Gahar began her remarks by thanking the RWI, ACPF and SCI for participating in the session and supporting the Committee in a broad range of ways. She shared that the forum could not be more urgent and relevant given the status of reporting under the Charter. She recalled that 43 out of 51 State Parties had submitted initial reports, while 22 had submitted at least one periodic report. She lamented the number of reports which were overdue by over 15 years as well as the eight State parties which had not submitted a single report. The Chairperson indicated that the Forum was convened to enhance awareness about the State Party reporting obligations and procedures and elaborate on its added value for all stakeholders involved. She emphasised that State Party Reporting Procedure was a critical tool for States to assess the level of implementation of the Charter in their respective jurisdictions, to share their best practices, learn from the experiences of other States, and enhance partnership and resource mobilisation for enhanced implementation. To conclude, she reiterated the importance of consultative and inclusive processes of report preparation, to galvanize collaboration and to maximise child participation. The Chairperson wished all participants a fruitful and successful State Party Reporting Forum.

146. Mr. Zwelethini Eugene Xaba, ACERWC Secretariat made a presentation on the Relevance of the State Party reporting procedure: What it means for States, Children, and other actors. Mr. Xaba began by breaking down the core obligations under Article 43 of the charter, identifying 4 primary duties, to submit an initial report in 2 years of the Charter's entry into force; to submit a periodic report every 3 years thereafter; so ensure every report contains sufficient information and to ensure that every report contains the challenges faced by State parties. He reflected on the Guidelines on State Party Reporting and the positive developments it introduces to flesh out the procedure. Mr. Xaba further articulated the full reporting procedure from submission to the submission of the State's written comments to the Committee's concluding observations. Mr. Xaba presented the current statistics regarding State Reporting, sharing that the decline in reports in the last few years was the reason this event was held. He highlighted that the Committee was involved in robust and rigorous advocacy efforts to achieve universal reporting and encourage effective and timely reporting. In his final remarks he called for State Parties to submit their overdue reports, designate focal points on State party Reporting, cooperate with the advocacy measures of the Committee and, where circumstances allow, adapt their UNCRC report for submission to the ACERWC.

147. As part of its 46th Ordinary Session, the ACERWC convened a dedicated forum on State Party reporting, featuring experience-sharing panels that highlighted practices from the UN CRC and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The discussion also included an insightful presentation on child participation in State reporting covering the process from compilation to consideration delivered by Alang Kelly Aristile, a child representative from Cameroon. This was followed by

presentations from States and an open plenary discussion. The session served as an important platform for strengthening learning, peer exchange, and the overall reporting culture within the Charter system and among member states.

148. Ms. Allegra Franchetti, Secretary of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) shared the experience of State Party reporting under the UN CRC. She explained the reporting obligations under Article 44 of the CRC, noting that States must submit regular reports demonstrating compliance and progress on children's rights, which the Committee reviews before issuing concluding observations. She emphasized that this process strengthens transparency, accountability, and national policy development, while fostering collaboration across ministries and encouraging the participation of a broad range of stakeholders to ensure that children's rights are properly mainstreamed. She also highlighted some of the delays in reporting, noting that 47 initial reports are overdue globally by which 25 of them from African States and that 36 periodic reports remain overdue, including 20 from Africa. In addition, 57 reports have been submitted but are still pending review. While the UN CRC's Capacity Building Programme operational since 2015 through four regional offices in Dakar, Yaoundé, Addis Ababa, and Pretoria in the continent of Africa has improved compliance and reduced some overdue reports, backlogs persist due to resource shortages and cancelled sessions due to Covid-19. Ms. Allegra further underscored strengthened AU–UN cooperation through the 2018 MoU and the 2023 Joint Framework, encouraging States to reinforce NMIRFs, integrate the National Recommendations Tracking Database, adopt joint CRC–ACERWC reporting methods, and utilize data from CRC, UPR, and SDG processes to streamline and harmonize national reporting.

149. Mr Mohamed Djalel Benabdoun, Senior Legal Expert, and Focal Point for State Reporting, ACHPR highlighted that reporting under the Banjul Charter is a legally binding obligation that all Member States must prioritize. He mentioned that six States Parties have not yet submitted their initial reports, while seven are fully up to date. He outlined the Commission's ongoing advocacy efforts such as technical workshops, follow-up missions, and diplomatic engagement to improve timely reporting. He stressed that periodic reports are essential for assessing progress, identifying implementation gaps, and strengthening compliance, while also enabling the sharing of best practices. He added that the Commission has developed an Advocacy Strategy for 2026, featuring targeted workshops, campaigns, and bilateral engagement to enhance reporting compliance and quality. He further explained that the Commission plans to conduct State visits in 2026 to countries with outstanding initial or periodic reports to encourage compliance. He underscored the vital role of civil society in both advocating for timely reporting and contributing to the drafting of accurate and inclusive reports. He also noted that financial and human resource constraints continue to limit the Commission's ability to review reports promptly. Despite these challenges, he commended the ACERWC for effectively managing State Party reporting under similar constraints and acknowledged the reporting fatigue many African States face due to multiple regional and international obligations.

150. Following the UNCRC and ACHPR presentations, the plenary discussion highlighted the need for an accessible database of State Party reports to enhance transparency and support targeted reporting. Participants encouraged the ACERWC to strengthen capacity-building efforts and consider adopting a simplified reporting

procedure, while also proposing that National Human Rights Institutions serve as ambassadors for State Party reporting. Representatives from the Sahrawi Republic, Mauritania, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Senegal echoed the importance of State Party reporting. Furthermore, issues were raised regarding sources of information for simplified reporting procedures, the criteria for identifying priority issues, follow-up to concluding observations, reporting fatigue, and the challenges posed by backlogs, limited resources, and political will. In response, the panel noted that partners can support report preparation, revised reporting guidelines are available, and information is drawn from previous concluding observations, submissions to other mechanisms, and follow-up indicators. They added that predictable review calendars and focused lists of issues help streamline and improve the efficiency of the reporting process.

151. Child Participation in the State Party Reporting Process, presented by Alang Kelly Aristile, a 17-year-old child representative from Cameroon, underscored the importance of ensuring that children's engagement in reporting is both meaningful and accessible. He noted that, although he had the opportunity to review the State Party report, its length and complexity made it challenging for children to fully engage with. He suggested that children's participation could be strengthened through State-led workshops that provide safe and structured spaces for children to share their views, in collaboration with children's organizations, national child rights networks, and children's parliaments. He further emphasized the value of holistic participation, including ensuring that children are informed about the reporting process, supported to form their own perspectives, and provided with child-friendly versions of reports through simplified formats, videos, or other engaging approaches to promote genuine, inclusive, and effective child participation.

152. Following the discussion with the child representative, the Chairperson of the Committee invited the eleven Member States to take the floor and provide brief presentations and reflections on the status of their State Party reports, along with updates on their technical, financial, and institutional preparedness. Member States were also encouraged to outline the challenges and opportunities encountered in the reporting process, identify any areas where support may be required, and indicate proposed timelines for the submission of their outstanding initial and periodic reports to the ACERWC.

ACERWC's Work on NMIRFs

153. Hon. Robert Nanima, Chairperson of the ACERWC Working Group on Implementation of Decisions, opened the panel discussion by welcoming participants and introducing the speakers. He underscored the critical role played by National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRFs) as central governmental structures responsible for coordinating State reporting, ensuring systematic follow-up to recommendations, and strengthening the implementation of human rights commitments, including those under the African Children's Charter. He emphasized that the objective of the session was to openly share experience and good practices on the NMIRFs role in the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee and successful reporting processes and strengthen engagement and collaboration between the ACERWC and NMIRFs.

154. Ms. Aouatef Mahjoub, from the ACERWC Secretariat, presented the Committee's work on National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-Up (NMIRFs). She emphasized that as more Member States establish national coordination structures for reporting and follow-up, NMIRFs have become essential to closing persistent implementation and reporting gaps, addressing backlogs, and ensuring that the rights guaranteed in the Charter translate into tangible results for children. Ms. Mahjoub outlined the rationale behind the work on NMIRFs, particularly drawing inspiration from the good practices of the UN system stating the UNGA and Human Rights Council resolutions including Resolution 51/33 (2022) which encourage States to institutionalize permanent national mechanisms. She further underscored the challenges identified by the Committee such as the growing reporting obligations, delays in periodic reporting, and limited follow-up to recommendations as well as the absence of national coordination mechanisms as one of the main reasons for non-compliance with the Committee's reporting obligations, whereas countries with institutionalised structures demonstrate better performance in implementing recommendations and reporting. Clarifying the nature of NMIRFs, she explained that they are government structures distinct from NHRIs typically anchored in law or decree, mandated to coordinate and prepare reports to and engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms and to coordinate and monitor national follow-up and implementation of the treaty obligations and the recommendations. She highlighted four core capacities that NMIRFs must possess: engagement, coordination, consultation, and information-management capacities. Ms. Mahjoub further presented the typology of implementation-reporting systems across the continent, noting that more structured, legally grounded mechanisms such as standing NMIRFs are associated with stronger compliance. She also summarised the Committee's initiatives in this area, including Resolutions 16/2022 and 23/2024, experience-sharing panels, and the Study on Implementation launched during the 45th Session.

155. She concluded by presenting the Committee's recommendations from Resolution 23/2024 as reiterated by the committee in its study on implementation of decision, which call on States to establish NMIRFs with a clear legal basis, sustainable funding, defined mandates, designated focal points, and inclusive consultation processes involving NHRIs, CSOs, and children. She encouraged NMIRFs to prioritise the implementation of ACERWC decisions, ensure timely reporting, develop action plans, track progress through national databases, and strengthen engagement with the Committee. She stressed that collaboration between the ACERWC and NMIRFs is essential, as real impact for children depends on coordinated, institutionalised, and sustained implementation efforts at the national level.

156. The session featured experience-sharing presentations from Senegal, Kenya, and Mauritania on the functioning, coordination practices, and challenges of their respective NMIRFs.

157. The delegate from Senegal Ms. Fatou BA, explained that Senegal's National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF) is an inter-ministerial structure established by Presidential Decree No. 2018-1969 of 15 November 2018. It operates through the National Consultative Council on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CCNDH-DIH), a permanent body housed

within the Ministry of Justice under the Directorate of Human Rights. The Council brings together representatives from all ministries, the National Assembly, the National Human Rights Institution (CNDH), the National Statistics Agency, and civil society organizations. Its mandate includes coordinating the collection of information, preparing treaty-body reports including to the ACERWC and overseeing national follow-up to decisions and recommendations from regional and international human rights mechanisms. It also advises the government and reviews national legislation to ensure alignment with international human rights standards. Coordination is ensured through monthly sessions of the CCNDH-DIH, chaired by the Minister of Justice. The preparation of Senegal's most recent periodic report to the ACERWC (submitted following the Committee's invitation to report by August 2022) was led by the Directorate of Human Rights, in collaboration with the Ministry responsible for children's affairs, civil society, NGOs, and technical/financial partners. The process benefitted from technical and financial support from the OHCHR Regional Office in Dakar and was formally validated by the CCNDH-DIH. Regarding resources, she indicated that the CCNDH-DIH has a dedicated budget under the Ministry of Justice. It is supported by technical commissions covering civil and political rights; economic, social, and cultural rights; environmental and development rights; and international humanitarian law.

158. Presenting Kenya's NMIRF experience, Ms. Caroline Meres, underscored that children represent 42.2% of the national population according to the 2024 Kenya Vital Statistics Report approximately 22.1 million children, with an equal girls-to-boys ratio. She emphasized that Kenya has a strong constitutional, legal, and policy framework for the protection of children's rights, including the Constitution of Kenya and the Children Act (Cap 141), which establishes the National Council for Children's Services (NCCS). The NCCS, a statutory body under the Ministry of Gender, Culture and Children's Services, is mandated to regulate, coordinate, and oversee children's services, including reporting on the implementation of ratified treaties such as the ACRWC, the CRC and the Hague Convention. She informed that Kenya is fully up to date with its reporting obligations to the ACERWC, having submitted its Initial Report in 2007, First Periodic Report in 2014, a combined Second and Third Report in 2018, and its Fourth Report recently in October 2025. The reporting process is grounded in domestic law, including the Treaty Making and Ratification Act, which outlines institutional responsibilities for treaty reporting.

159. Ms. Caroline explained that reporting and follow-up processes are coordinated through a national Technical Working Group led by NCCS and composed of representatives from key Ministries, Departments and Agencies, the Council of Governors, independent commissions (such as the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the National Gender and Equality Commission, and the Ombudsman), and non-state actors. The TWG adopts a workplan with timelines and budget estimates and uses statistical and status-tracking matrices aligned with ACERWC reporting guidelines to assess implementation of concluding observations. Reports undergo extensive multi-phase consultation and validation with state and non-state actors before being submitted through the Attorney General and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs via formal diplomatic channels. Children participate meaningfully in the process, both physically and virtually primarily through the Kenya Children's

Assembly, with parental consent and adherence to data-protection standards. For the latest report, approximately 360 child representatives took part.

160. Additionally, she informed that Kenya has developed several data-management systems within different institutions but noted the absence of an integrated national child database as a key gap. Other challenges include limited structured child participation and resource constraints due to the intensive nature of State Party reporting. Despite these challenges, Kenya benefits from strong governmental goodwill, close collaboration between state and non-state actors, and continuous engagement with the ACERWC and other Member States for peer learning. The presenter further highlighted lessons learned, including the importance of embedding reporting obligations in national law, maintaining a collaborative and participatory approach, budgeting for reporting processes, and developing structured mechanisms for meaningful child participation. She concluded by affirming the readiness of the Government of Kenya for the consideration of the Fourth Periodic Report during the next session of the Committee.

161. Mr Lab Bousseif presented Mauritania's experience in establishing and operationalizing its National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF) on human rights obligations. He mentioned that Mauritania's NMIRF is hosted within the Commission for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Relations with Civil Society (CDHAHRSC), established under Decree No. 247-2008. The Commission is mandated to Prepare and implement the national human rights policy; Coordinate the State's engagement with international, regional, and sub-regional human rights mechanisms; Compile and submit national reports, and monitor the implementation of recommendations and Ensure institutional coordination among ministries, national institutions, and civil-society organizations to guarantee accuracy and comprehensiveness of data. He indicated that Mauritania has established a permanent multisectoral technical committee, the CTIERSR, responsible for preparing national reports to treaty bodies including the ACERWC as well as Monitoring implementation of recommendations by the Government, and following up on recommendations from other bodies, including the U.S. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report.

162. He further emphasized that following the establishment of the CDHAHRSC in 2014 and institutional reforms in 2018, 2021, and 2024 strengthened its mandate. It is composed of representatives from more than 20 ministries and operates with a dedicated sub-committee tasked with information gathering and coordination. Additionally, Mauritania has developed a National Recommendation Tracking Database (NRTD) as a national digital database dedicated to the implementation of recommendations made to the government by international and regional human rights mechanisms. It was developed in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with main functions for user-friendly interface enabling easy access for government actors, civil society, and experts; regular updates allowing real-time integration of new information and status reports. And provides analytical tools generating progress reports, identifying gaps, and supporting decision-making. The database classifies recommendations by mechanism, theme, and responsible institution, facilitates follow-up and evaluation of

implementation steps and involves civil-society organizations through consultation and monitoring.

163. During the open discussion, the delegate from Libya expressed appreciation for the presentations and emphasized the importance of structured information-sharing, coordinated action plans, and strengthened collaboration among States and the Committee. Members of the Committee sought further clarity on how these mechanisms engage with the ACERWC and reiterated the importance of designating national focal points, as recommended by the Committee. Kenya reported strong and consistent engagement with the ACERWC, including participation in consultative meetings during the 44th Ordinary Session and regular exchanges that facilitate guidance and follow-up. Senegal highlighted the significant sensitization and coordination efforts undertaken by its NMIRF and underscored the need to designate a national focal point for ACERWC matters. Mauritania also confirmed its satisfaction with the level of cooperation and communication established with the Committee and noted its commitment to designating a focal point to strengthen engagement with the ACERWC.

ITEM 23 : Presentation on the new Strategic Plan of the ACERWC (2026-2028)-

164. Mr Shumba Tichawona, Consultant for the development of the new ACERWC Strategic Plan 2026-28, presented the draft structure of the plan, noting that it is grounded in the Charter, the Committee's core values and principles, and aligned with broader African Union strategic plans. He highlighted the transition from a log-frame planning approach to a balanced scorecard approach to strengthen monitoring, reporting, and accountability. He also emphasised the importance of participatory consultations, noting that stakeholder engagement is critical, and that alignment with AU organs is essential to avoid fragmented planning cycles and strengthen joint implementation. Mr Shumba explained that the draft includes a situation analysis, including internal strengths and weaknesses and a review of the nine thematic areas of focus. He presented the draft theory of change, the key performance indicators, and the plan for a strategy map and scorecard for monitoring and evaluation.

165. Following the presentation, the floor was opened for comments and questions from stakeholders in the room. Issues raised include on timelines to finalize the Strategic Plan and the role of all stakeholders including Regional Economic Communities; the strategic focus on some thematic areas such as the situation of children in conflict, climate change, and other urgent priorities; that it should also take into account emerging issues, the need to revise the KPIs; the need for a comprehensive risk analysis; the need for including cross cutting matters; and producing a child friendly version of it.

ITEM 24 : Presentation by ACPF on the report "Toiling for Survival: Children in Urban Informal Sector in Africa"

166. Mr. Yehualashet Mekonen, Director, African Child Observatory at the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) presented on the findings of the synthesis report entitled, "Toiling for Survival: Children in Urban Informal Sector in Africa". This report was prepared under the African Children's Charter Project (ACCP) and focuses on the thematic priority on child rights and business. The presenter described the situation of

children in urban informal economic sectors as a systematic crisis unfolding in the context of rapidly urbanizing Africa and proliferating informal sectors in towns and cities as the main source of livelihood to poor families with children. It was highlighted that 87 million children are engaged in child labour in Africa where almost all of them (99 per cent) work in the informal economy and experience widespread violation of their basic rights to survival, development and protection provided for in the ACRWC. It was further unveiled that 41 million children are engaged in hazardous work affecting their health and education and undermining their overall wellbeing and future prospects. The presenter described the situation as highly paradoxical in that the hazardous work that children perform ensures their survival today, while at the same time destroying their future potential to engage in decent work.

167. The presenter further noted that the legal architecture to protect children from exploitative labour across Africa is well established and mostly aligned with global standards. The critical failure, he underlined, relates to systemic lack of resources and political will to enforce them. A complex interplay of economic, social and political factors is mentioned as a driving force. Poverty in particular was noted to be one of the primary causes that push children in urban settings to engage in hazardous works. The presentation concluded with an urgent call to relevant stakeholders for action to enhance the protection of children in urban informal sector through expanding reach out of monitoring and regulating bodies to places where hazardous and exploitative work of children takes place. It also highlighted the need for strengthening social protection programmes including school feeding programmes targeting disadvantaged families with children in urban centres and address the root causes that compel them to send children to hazardous work.

168. Following the presentation, Hon. Members of the Committee and other participants shared their comments on the report. In addition to reiterating the relevance of the report, particularly in relation to the work of the Working Group on business and child rights, they noted that evidence and policy recommendations are useful for State Parties, members of the Committee and other national and regional stakeholders including the private sector. They also shared their concerns with lack of adequate intervention to protect these vulnerable children and asked on ways of strengthening enforcement to enhance protection. Questions on the situation of working children in conflict situations, methodology and approach related issues were raised. In responding to the queries, Mr Yehualashet Mekonen underlined that the Charter and labour laws and regulations were key guiding tools in the analysis complemented with ILO standards and principles at work that most Member States have adopted. He noted that the observations made on urgency for strengthening protection resonated well and goes in line with the purpose of the report and adherence to ethical and child safeguarding makes the report robust.

Official launch of the report on “Toiling for Survival: Children in Urban Informal Sector in Africa”

169. The report on “Toiling for Survival: Children in Urban Informal Sector in Africa” was officially launched by Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing, member of the Committee and Chairperson of the Working Group on Business and Children’s Rights. Before officially launching the report, Hon. Hermine Kembo delivered remarks where she noted that the report is confronting us with painful facts and showing us that the

situation of children in informal sector is a profoundly urgent matter. She further noted that it is a resounding report that is based on reality that millions of children are facing and showing the systemic failure in addressing child protection in the informal sector that is not regulated, yet with high risks. As Chairperson of the Working Group on Business and Child Rights, she noted that the findings resonate with challenges they face in their work and that the report will serve as useful resource to guide the work of the Working Group to strengthen accountability at the informal sector. Hon. Kembo further noted that children have spoken in the report that they are tired, bored and scared and these voices underscore the need to confront the root causes that compel families to send their children to work in hazardous conditions. She concluded her remarks by pledging both as Working Group and member of the Committee to promote translation of the recommendations into actions and declared that the report is officially launched.

ITEM 25 : Launch of the General Comment on Article 11 on the Right to Education

170. Hon Poloko Nuggert Ntshwarang, Special Rapporteur on Education of the ACERWC, while moderating the Panel, delivered a welcoming address for the launch of the General Comment (GC) on Article 11 of the ACERWC. She emphasized that the GC, developed under the Committee's mandate in Article 42 of the Charter, serves as an authoritative interpretation of the right to education, aimed at addressing Africa-specific challenges to education such as gender-based discrimination, conflict, poverty, and inaccessibility. Hon. Ntshwarang highlighted the GC's role in clarifying state obligations and guiding all stakeholders and framed the launch as a starting point for renewed advocacy and strategic implementation to make the right to education a reality for every child on the continent.

171. Adiam Zemenfes Tsighe, Senior Legal Researcher at the Secretariat, presented the content and salient features of the GC. She highlighted that it includes the child's evolving capacity as a principle alongside non-discrimination, best interest, participation, and life, survival and development. The GC provides guidance to create enabling environments for children's development, integrate African history and values to foster unity, and contextualize human rights education. It emphasizes preserving African values like tolerance and community cohesion while denouncing harmful practices. Education should prepare children to embrace diversity, reject stereotypes, and prevent conflict and extremism. The GC calls for including country-specific actions on climate change, primary healthcare, sanitation, nutrition, and pregnancy prevention. Ms Tsighe also explained that education is broadly interpreted by the GC to include all stages from early childhood education to tertiary education and also various forms of education including home schooling. The GC offers for at least one year free and compulsory early childhood education. To ensure free primary education, it requires removing hidden fees and fees related to accessing schools such as transport costs and calls for gradual reduction of secondary education fees to make it progressively free. In ensuing tertiary education on the basis of ability and capacity, it provides that children of various abilities are not left behind by providing alternative trainings that meet their capacities.

172. With a view to ensure regular attendance and reduction of dropout rates, Ms Tsighe, noted that the GC calls for addressing factors that lead to dropouts such as socio-economic, school environment, curriculum related, and discriminatory factors among others. It advises States to define gifted children and train teachers on identifying and catering for their needs. The GC explicitly prohibits corporal punishment by parents and schools, advocating instead for boundary-based methods of discipline and punitive sanctions on teachers. Ms Tsighe informed that special attention is given to supporting children who become pregnant to continue their education by the Charter, and informed that the GC prohibits the expulsion of pregnant girls and related practices such as pregnancy testing in schools. It provide support to girls who fall pregnant and integrate prevention efforts such as sexual reproductive health education in schools. Finally, the obligations of the State in ensuring the realization of these educational rights were mentioned which include legislative, administrative, budgetary, and judicial measures. Particularly, the need to make education a justiciable right was underlined.

173. Dr Maria Oliveira, Representative of the Republic of Cabo Verde&Director of the Institute for Children and Adolescents of the Republic of Cabo Verde delivered a presentation on the critical role of education financing in achieving Africa's development goals for children. Dr. Oliveira framed education as a long-term investment with considerable returns, essential for sustainable development. She affirmed that education is a critical pillar for achieving Agenda 2063 and called for strong budget allocation to ensure equitable access to quality education. Drawing from Cabo Verde's experience, she emphasized that investment in education must be matched by increased tax collection, with specific targets to direct resources towards education. Dr. Oliveira stressed that having better national income is not sufficient; there must be mechanisms to ensure efficient spending, supported by enhanced accountability and transparency.

174. The presentation highlighted the direct link between education and overall growth and poverty reduction, emphasizing that education directly contributes to poverty reduction and increased health awareness about risk hazards. Particular attention was given to ensuring access for young girls in remote communities, and other vulnerable groups. Dr. Oliveira pointed out the importance of investing in technological development and human capital, noting that Cabo Verde has increased its investment in education by allocating 15% of the state budget in education, which is further supplemented by donor support. This sustained investment has yielded significant outcomes, including increased literacy rates, enhanced education access, and elevated educational milestones contributing to Cabo Verde's rise from lower middle-income country to upper middle-income country. While emphasizing the importance of social mobilization, and direct investment for education, she highlighted the importance of identifying funding gaps, prevent illicit flows, and inter-governmental collaboration. She noted the need to involve the private sector in education financing, alongside development partners, particularly for school infrastructure.

175. Mrs Sekhotseng Adam Molapo, Director of National Curriculum Development Centre in the Ministry of Education and Training of the Kingdom of Lesotho presented on education relevant for the 21st century: education as a right and means to achieve other rights. She began by highlighting the enabling legal environment in Lesotho,

including the Constitution which is supported by the Education Act of 2010, providing for free and compulsory education, the Inclusive Education Policy for learners with special needs and the Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy, which prioritizes competency-based education and 21st-century skills. She outlined several strategic steps taken by Lesotho to equip learners for the modern world such as the curriculum reform to integrate 21st-century skills, expanding reception classes and training early childhood educators, and the provision of tablets. In the early grades, emphasis is placed on literacy, numeracy, and life skills, while incorporating communication and media literacy. The education system is shifting from a content-based to a competency-based approach, phasing out primary-level qualifications and introducing an integrated curriculum. She indicated that at the secondary level, technical and vocational skills; advanced secondary and life skills-based sexuality education are offered.

176. Mrs Malapo informed that ICT is integrated by introducing digital literacy in upper primary, the use of computers and tablets in classrooms, installation of smartboards in some institutions, and the promotion of online educational resources. Moreover, professional development for teachers is provided, focusing on learner-centred pedagogy, ICT integration, inclusive education practices, and updated curriculum methods. Special education services are offered for learners with disabilities, free primary education has been expanded, and barriers at the secondary level are being reduced through improved infrastructure. Mrs Molapo mentioned that some challenges including lack of basic infrastructure such as electricity and internet connectivity, limited access to devices like laptops and tablets for students and teachers, a notable digital divide between urban and rural areas, and high repetition and dropout rates.

177. Ms. Elsy Sainna, Associate Director for Advocacy and External Relations at the Center for Reproductive Rights, spoke on litigating the right to education and the instrumental role of the GC. She began by framing litigation as a facilitating tool and emphasized that the GC provides a broad interpretive framework for educational rights and violations. Ms. Sainna highlighted several key opportunities for litigation arising from the GC, particularly through examining the nexus between different rights and legal frameworks. She emphasized the need to identify and challenge discriminatory laws and processes that undermine the right to education. Noting that litigation can be used to address critical questions regarding accessibility, availability, and quality of education. Specific thematic areas were outlined as ripe for legal action through strategic litigation, including ensuring school safety by addressing corporal punishment and holding institutions accountable, protecting the right to education for pregnant teenage girls and documenting related violations, and securing access to education for children with disabilities. Ms. Sainna outlined some challenges faced in litigation of the right to education including lack of harmonization across different legal domains such as education, health, and child protection. She also pointed out the challenge of availability of evidence stressing that data collection must be integrated into litigation strategies and remedies. She amplified the role of litigation to address structural discrimination within educational institutions. Ms. Sainna called for addressing digital exclusion, the need to engage private actors in these conversations, and the imperative to ensure children receive comprehensive sexuality education and age-appropriate information on primary health care. In conclusion, her presentation

underscored litigation as a vital mechanism for enforcing educational rights as explained in the General Comment.

178. During the Launch, two child representatives shared their voices about corporal punishment and other violences in schools and communities affecting education.

179. Kisu Thokozile Chipala, a girl Child Representative from Zambia, mentioned that education is key to a bright future and children need access to quality, accessible, and non-discriminatory education. For this, she said that schools must be a safe and supportive environment. Kisu shared that in Zambia corporal punishment is prohibited and can be reported, however, it persists in homes. Furthermore, she highlighted the prevalence of other forms of abuse, including sexual abuse and emotional abuse in settings such as schools, home, and churches, which often are not addressed even when reported. The Child Representative outlined the devastating effects of such violence on a child's life and education including low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, a loss of interest in activities and education, as well as suicidal thoughts, which subsequently lead to drug and alcohol abuse as coping mechanisms. Kisu advocated for positive and constructive alternatives to corporal punishment within schools, suggesting activities such as sweeping during breaks, arranging books in libraries, or shining floors. She called for all African States to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, empower children to report abuse without fear, and end impunity.

180. Derith Mendengue, a boy Child Representative from Cameroon, also noted while corporal punishment is prohibited by law in Cameroon, in practice many teachers continue to use it, alongside other harmful methods such as forcing children into painful positions and beatings. Beyond physical punishment, he informed verbal abuse remains prevalent. Children with disabilities face marginalization, experiencing rejection from both schoolmates and teachers, who often do not provide them with a fair chance to learn. Derith also identified bullying, lack of hygiene facilities in schools, social isolation, sexual exploitation, child marriage, and child labour including domestic labour as critical barriers to education. He also emphasized the psychological impact of such violence such as lack of self-confidence and poor relationship between teachers and children. He called for the prohibiting corporal punishment, enforcing laws prohibiting violence, developing and disseminating guidelines for positive discipline, training teachers and parents on the same, strengthening child protection systems, launching campaigns against school violence and provide psycho social support for children.

181. During the plenary discussions, emphasis was given on the need to develop guidelines on positive disciplining to ensure that parents and teachers have alternative modalities of disciplining. Moreover, inquiries were made on the guidance to support pregnant girls' education by sharing the experience of Democratic Republic of Congo, which faced a challenge from catholic schools who refused the Government circular to retain pregnant girls in schools. In this regard, the need to treat pregnant girls as victims and provide them with support was emphasized. It was also highlighted that the GC requires States to provide alternative and flexible education, provide early childhood care for the children of pregnant girls, and invest in prevention of teenage pregnancy by integrating sexual reproductive health education in schools. Moreover, the GC's position on the responsibility of States to regulate faith-based education facilities to ensure they do not discrimination on a prohibited grounds was mentioned as guidance.

182. Finally, Hon. Poloko Nuggert Ntshwarang, Special Rapporteur on Education of the Committee officially launched General Comment No 09 on Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on the Right to Education.

ITEM 26 : Presentation of the Draft Report on Children on the Move

183. Dr. Admark Moyo, the consultant leading the Assessment Study on the Situation of Children on the Move in Africa, made a presentation of the draft report of the study. The Study was commissioned by the ACERWC to evaluate Member States' progress in implementing its 2019 Mapping Study recommendations and to interrogate emerging issues, persistent challenges and opportunities, with the aim of crafting evidence-based recommendations to Member States in strengthening child protection in the context of movement. He outlined the study's mixed-method approach, comprising a comprehensive desk review, key informant interviews, and standardised questionnaires to Member States, supplemented by a Member States' Consultative Forum.

184. The presentation highlighted that children on the move continue to be driven by intersecting factors, including armed conflict, insecurity, climate-linked shocks, socio-economic hardship, and harmful practices. Armed conflict remains the dominant cause of displacement, with several Member States reporting significant movements of children fleeing violence. Climate change and weather-related disasters were also identified as escalating drivers, with recurrent floods, droughts, and environmental degradation triggering large-scale internal movements, particularly in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. In addition, Dr Admark noted persistent risks of trafficking, smuggling, economic exploitation, and sexual violence, compounded by serious barriers to legal identity, nationality, health care, and education for migrant, refugee, and displaced children. The preliminary findings reveal that while some States have adopted progressive laws and policies since 2019, major gaps remain in enforcement, coordination, and child-sensitive service delivery.

185. He further presented emerging good practices, including decentralised civil registration reforms, inclusive health policies, and community-based child protection models, while emphasising ongoing challenges such as inadequate data systems, discriminatory practices, child immigration detention, and limited climate-responsive protection interventions. It was noted that the study seeks not only to assess compliance with previous recommendations but also to identify new opportunities for strengthening the continental framework on Children on the Move, including improved early-warning systems, stronger cross-border cooperation, enhanced accountability mechanisms, and integrated, child-sensitive approaches to conflict, mobility, and climate resilience.

186. Members of the ACERWC, Member State Representatives and participants of the Session welcomed the presentation and provided a wide range of inputs to strengthen the study. They emphasized the need to clearly reflect the role of UNHCR and to ensure that national policies explicitly prioritize children in humanitarian recovery programmes, including those in displacement, return, and reintegration contexts. Delegates stressed the importance of highlighting the situation of returnee children, the vulnerabilities of children of undocumented parents, and the risks faced

along migratory routes, including exposure to armed group recruitment, trafficking, and grave dangers in the Mediterranean crossing. It was recommended that the study develop specific indicators aligned with the 2019 Mapping Study's recommendations, integrate resilience-building measures pending the establishment of robust climate adaptation mechanisms, and address gaps in children's education, socio-economic wellbeing, and protection during natural disasters. Further inputs called for attention to differing minimum ages of criminal responsibility across States, the inclusion of positive mobility drivers such as cross-border movement for education, and an expanded focus on children, particularly girls, who migrate to Gulf States for domestic work, given their heightened risk of exploitation. In concluding the Session, the consultant responded by noting that the study is still under development and confirmed that all inputs will be incorporated into the final draft.

ITEM 27 : Presentation by Africhild

187. Mr. Timothy Opobo, Executive Director of the AfriChild Centre, presented a proposed study titled *“Responding to Orphanage Trafficking in Africa,”* to be undertaken by the AfriChild Centre in collaboration with two Members of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Griffith University, the Inter-Parliamentary Union Task Force on Human Trafficking, and Hope and Homes for Children. The presenter outlined the contextual background of orphanage trafficking in Africa and articulated the urgent need for the proposed study to address this growing concern. He noted that an estimated 35 million children are growing up without parental care on the African continent. While significant efforts are underway to strengthen child protection systems and advance deinstitutionalisation, orphanage trafficking remains an under-researched issue. It is an emerging concern that intersects with residential care across many Global South countries, raising serious child protection and human rights implications. Since 2005, non-governmental organisations have consistently reported the recruitment of children into residential care for purposes of exploitation and profit. In several countries, the proliferation of orphanages—often described as an “orphanage industry”—has been driven in part by high levels of tourist, volunteer, and foreign donor interest in supporting orphaned children. Despite these trends, there is limited systematic understanding of how orphanage trafficking manifests across the African region, or of how governments and civil society actors are responding to the problem.

188. The presenter noted that Article 25 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) provides safeguards for children separated from parental care, while the relevant General Comment emphasizes the need to address the root causes of separation from families and communities. This proposed study aligns closely with the General Comment by undertaking empirical mapping across five African countries, generating evidence to assess how policies translate into care system reforms and to identify gaps in implementation. The data generated will contribute to strengthening monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) systems and normative frameworks, with a specific focus on protecting children who are at risk of, or already experiencing, orphanage trafficking.

189. The presentation concluded by underscoring that by conducting the first ever in-depth studies of the representative sample of countries across the African Union

including Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana and Liberia, we will develop a range of tools that are able to be utilised in other country contexts across the African Union. The project will enrich current efforts in the areas of deinstitutionalisation and child protection systems, by providing tools and programs that can be implemented to address the issue of orphanage trafficking as a driver of child institutionalisation. The project will be catalytic in transforming responses to orphanage trafficking across the civil society, government, law enforcement and prosecutor sectors in the chosen countries and will provide a blueprint for assessing responses to orphanage trafficking in other African nations.

190. Following the presentation, Honourable Members of the Committee expressed strong support for the proposed study. The Members welcomed the study's potential to generate much-needed evidence to inform policy, strengthen child protection systems, and guide the work of both governments and regional child rights mechanisms in responding effectively to this growing concern. In addition, other participants in the room, including representatives of Member States, civil society organisations, and partner institutions, responded positively to the proposed study. Several participants noted the relevance of the research to their national and regional contexts and welcomed its focus on generating practical, evidence-based recommendations. The study was viewed as a valuable contribution to ongoing efforts to prevent exploitation within residential care settings, strengthen alternative care systems, and support coordinated action among governments, civil society, and regional bodies to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of children across Africa.

ITEM 28 : 2nd Follow-up to the First Ministerial Conference on VAC- Organized by ACPF

Presentation on the African Child Policy Forum's report titled "Africa's Adolescents: Against All Odds"

191. Mr. Girma Gadisa Tufa, Senior Technical Officer at the ACPF, presented the major findings and recommendations of the ACPF's report titled "Africa's Adolescents: Against All Odds". Mr. Tufa started by emphasising that Africa's 317 million adolescents, representing one in five Africans, remain largely invisible in laws, policies, and programmes. This growing demographic is often neglected in national and regional agendas. He noted that, in undertaking this study, ACPF collected primary data by conducting focus group discussions with adolescents from eight African countries to understand their lived realities. He further indicated that national-level actors (representatives of different ministries and CSOs) from 15 countries were consulted using key informant interview tools. Moreover, ACPF engaged with treaty monitoring bodies, regional economic communities, and INGOs to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing adolescents in Africa.

192. Mr. Tufa indicated that ACPF undertook this study to provide an overview of the state of adolescent rights in Africa; looking into their agency and autonomy, access to services as well as their risks and vulnerabilities. Discussing the understanding of adolescence in Africa, he noted that the concept of adolescence in Africa goes beyond age categorization and is shaped by cultural, spiritual, and communal values. Adolescence is a critical stage of life characterized by my physical and psychological development. Investment in adolescents in this stage of life yields more returns while lack of investment significantly affects their development. Adding on another

dimension of adolescence in Africa, he emphasized that African adolescents grow within a communal hierarchy under supremacy of collective authority and multiplicity of actors with little room for making autonomous decisions. In addition, African adolescents are “dutiful”, meaning, they are expected to uphold cultural values and contribute economically and socially – Responsibility of the child – Article 31 of ACRWC. They face violence and exploitation. Yet they are claiming their rights, confronting practices that affect their lives and leading changes in their communities.

193. In terms of access to services, Mr. Tufa noted that progress has been made, but there are still gaps that need to be addressed. Adolescents face serious health risks such as unsafe abortion, childbirth complications, and mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and trauma. Access to age and gender appropriate SRH information and services remains a challenge. Nearly 1 in 5 adolescents use harmful substances, driven by stress, unemployment and peer influence. Furthermore, he noted that expenditure in the education sector is much lower than global targets. About 65 million adolescents of lower- and upper-secondary school age are out of school. One-third of African countries have secondary enrolment rates below 50%. Only 5% of adolescents with disabilities complete primary education. In addition, he noted that many adolescents across Africa face barriers to justice, particularly those living in rural areas and adolescents with disabilities. Justice systems rarely meet adolescents’ needs and often the response to adolescent drug use remains anchored in punitive justice systems rather than comprehensive public health strategies. Adolescents with disabilities including adolescents with albinism, adolescents who live and/or work on the streets and internally displaced adolescents, face intersecting vulnerabilities, compounded exclusion, multiple deprivation and challenges to access essential services. Climate change and conflict exacerbate adolescents’ vulnerabilities.

194. Mr. Tufa emphasised despite the challenges, adolescents are demanding their rights and accountability using existing child participation platforms and digital spaces. They are reshaping narratives from vulnerability to agency and leadership. In terms of priorities for action, he recommended harmonisation of domestic laws with international and regional child rights standards and effective implementation of the laws; investment in and expansion of adolescent-friendly services; equipping adolescents with vocational and digital skills, creation and sustaining platforms for meaningful adolescent participation from local councils to national and regional levels and empowering families to protect and guide adolescents while respecting their autonomy.

195. Following the presentation, Members of the ACERWC and partner organisations commended ACPF for focusing on adolescents, often neglected group of children and expressed their interest in working together with ACPF in the implementation of the recommendations. In addition, Mr. Tufa responded to questions raised by ACERWC Members and CSOs representatives regarding the scope and content of the study.

ITEM 29 : Report on the Status of Implementation of the 2nd Implementation Phase of Agenda 2040-,

196. Prof Frans Viljoen, Consultant for the development of the Report on the Status of Implementation of the 2nd Implementation Phase of Agenda 2040, presented a

progress update on the assessment which will run until the end of 2025 and be formally presented at the Committee's 47th Ordinary Session in 2026. He explained that Agenda 2040 was adopted in 2015 and was intended to galvanise energy around the Committee's work. The implementation spans five phases, with the first covering 2016-2020 and the current phase (second phase) focusing on 2021-2025. He noted that the assessment uses shifting baselines, beginning with 2015, and draws on core Committee documents, primary sources, and secondary materials from CSOs, NHRIs, and academic work, complemented by ongoing consultations with stakeholders. The final report will outline key achievements of phase two and actions required for phase three. Prof. Viljoen focused Aspirations 1 and 7 to illustrate key elements of the assessment and to provide a clear overview of the status of implementation.

Aspiration 1: The Charter, as supervised by the Committee, provides an effective continental framework for advancing children's rights

- Continent-wide ratification of the Charter: In 2015, there were 47 States Parties. By the end of Phase 1 (2020), this number had increased to 50.
 - o In the current phase, one additional ratification has been recorded, by the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. Somalia has reportedly ratified domestically but has not yet deposited its instrument of ratification.
 - o Reaching the "55" mark by 2030 will require targeted engagement with Morocco, Somalia, South Sudan, and Tunisia. An advocacy mission has already been undertaken to South Sudan and Somalia, with further missions recommended for the remaining states.
- Withdrawal of all reservations to the Charter: In 2015, several reservations remained in place.
 - o In the current period, Botswana has withdrawn its reservation to Article 2 following an advocacy mission, however, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic ratified the Charter but entered a reservation, illustrating that universal ratification may come with trade-offs that must be navigated carefully, particularly in contexts such as Somalia where high rates of FGM raise complex normative concerns.
- All States Parties submit their initial reports (a target originally set for 2014): After the 2016-2020 period, 12 states had still not done so.
 - o During the current phase, five states have submitted, leaving seven outstanding. Cabo Verde, Libya, Mauritius, and São Tomé and Príncipe have expressed commitments that may result in further submissions before the end of 2025.
 - o Advocacy missions to Botswana, The Gambia, and Cabo Verde have yielded results, with states either submitting or committing formally to submit their reports.
- Soft-law development and norm-setting have expanded significantly. In 2015, there were four instruments (two general comments, one model law, and a declaration). Phase 1 saw the adoption of four additional general comments.
 - o In the current phase, more documents have been adopted including four more general comments, four guidelines, guiding notes, formal publication of resolutions, all of which contain normative guidance to States Parties.
- Member States, CSOs, and NHRIs also contribute to realising Agenda 2040.

- Observer status for CSOs expanded from 17 organisations in 2015 to 51 as we approach the end of Phase 2, with 19 new CSOs being granted observer status. The majority, however, remain concentrated in Southern and East Africa, with limited representation from North, Central, and West Africa. The assessment will highlight this imbalance and propose targeted actions.
- Implementation has received progressively greater attention since Agenda 2040 was drafted. Initial efforts in 2015 were largely ad hoc, relying on follow-up missions. Phase 1 (2016-2020) included five follow-up missions and the establishment of the Working Group on Implementation of Decisions.
 - In the current phase, the Working Group has become fully operational, expanded to include external experts, and supported the adoption of the first resolution on implementation, the organisation of the first implementation workshops, and the completion of a comprehensive study on implementation. Seven follow-up missions have been dedicated specifically to implementation of concluding observations, demonstrating a clear strengthening of the Committee's implementation architecture.

Aspiration 7: Every child is protected against violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse

- In the first phase, the goal was that by 2020 Member States should have domesticated and designated 18 years as the minimum age of marriage and prohibited all forms of FGM. With respect to FGM, the 2015 baseline showed that 25 states had outlawed the practice either explicitly or under general criminal law. Legislative progress reached a saturation point, as only Sudan adopted new legislation in Phase 1 through its transitional government in 2020.
- In the current phase (2021-2025), the focus shifted to research to better understand the determinants of child marriage and to strict enforcement of existing laws on harmful practices.
 - No new legislation has been adopted, but several important developments have emerged: the extension of the mandate of the anti-FGM Board in Kenya; sustained pushback against The Gambia's 2015 anti-FGM legislation; and the Committee's engagement regarding Sierra Leone's amendment of the Child Rights Act to ensure it explicitly outlaws FGM, which unfortunately was not included in the final Act.
 - On this basis, the next phase should prioritise the ten states with the highest prevalence rates of FGM. Approximately half of these states already have specific legislation, hence requiring a dual approach, (1) advocacy for the adoption of laws where none exist, and (2) strengthened enforcement, social mobilisation, and engagement with traditional communities in states where laws are already in place.

197. Prof. Viljoen highlighted several emerging challenges and opportunities from the ongoing assessment, noting that while the assessment will only be completed at the end of 2025, there are preliminary issues that warrant consideration for the next phase, including but not limited to:

- Challenges

- There are overlapping targets, for example, there is an overarching target for 2040, alongside specific targets for 2020 and 2025, which are not always perfectly aligned, requiring a holistic approach.
 - Another issue is incomplete baselines. Even the 2015 baselines are not statistically complete, creating gaps that continue as the study approaches 2025, since some data will not be available for the entire period.
 - There is also the question of synergy between Agenda 2040 and other instruments, such as the Committee's Strategic Plan, and how this alignment can be strengthened.
 - Agenda 2040 was drafted ten years ago, and new developments, issues, and priorities have since emerged. The question is whether the agenda itself should be adjusted or whether these developments should be reflected in short-term action steps. Agenda 2040 operates at a relatively general level, and changes can be incorporated into action plans. Climate change, child rights and business, children's rights and new technologies, and the role of RECs and the AfCFTA are examples of areas that now require explicit integration.
 - COVID-19 demonstrated that meetings can be held virtually, raising the question of whether hybrid and virtual modalities have been fully utilised.
- Opportunities
- The relocation of the Committee and the benefits of being based in Lesotho can be amplified, particularly as this introduces an element not foreseen when the agenda was drafted.
 - There are new working methods within the ACERWC which adds another dimension to how Agenda 2040 is understood and pursued. For example, there is the establishment of working groups with external experts, as well as NHRIs with affiliate status which only started in 2021 and now there are 22 NHRIs that have been granted Affiliate Status.
 - Ensuring meaningful child participation in the assessment process and presenting the assessment in a form that is not overly formalistic, including through a concise child-friendly version, is an additional consideration.
 - There is a need for greater awareness-raising around Agenda 2040. The agenda appears in documents, such as General Comments, however, it is often absent in concluding observations.

198. Following the presentation, the following questions and comments were raised by participants:

- Many States have ratified the Charter but have not submitted initial or periodic reports. The assessment should analyse the obstacles preventing timely reporting and propose ways to strengthen compliance.
- Agenda 2040 is insufficiently reflected in concluding observations and working methods, in this regard, clarification is needed on how the Committee can systematically integrate Agenda 2040 into the work of country rapporteurs, Special Rapporteurs, and thematic working groups.
- Beyond adoption of instruments, the assessment should evaluate impact and pertinence, including whether concrete improvements have occurred in

children's daily lives at the national level (i.e., separation of children from adults in detention) and how children's participation influences outcomes.

- The implications of the ongoing AU reform proposals need to be assessed, including the potential risks they pose to the Committee's mandate and the realisation of Agenda 2040.
- Clarification was sought on whether the assessment analyses variations in implementation, including identifying areas where implementation is strongest or weakest across communications, concluding observations, and other normative outputs.

ITEM 30 : TECHNICAL WORKSHOP WITH NHRIS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

199. The technical workshop was conducted to identify sources of decisions of the Committee that should be implemented; examine the current status of implementation and the barriers that persist; identify opportunities for stronger follow-up mechanisms and coordinated action; share successful strategies and lessons from countries where progress has been realized; and, amplify the rights and voices of girls, which form a major part of the communications which have been considered.

Opening Remarks and Panel Discussion on ACERWC Decisions, Implementation Status, and Jurisprudence

200. The opening remarks were delivered by the Chairperson of the Committee's Working Group on Implementation of Decisions, Hon. Robert Doya Nanima. In his remarks, he highlighted the provisions of Article 44 of the African Children's Charter, which mandate the Committee to receive communications on alleged child rights violations, sharing that to date, the Committee has received 28 communications, of which 10 have been finalised on merits, and three have been amicably settled. He noted the underutilization of the Committee's communication mandate, pointing out that the Committee has undertaken initiatives to enhance knowledge and sensitise litigators on child rights litigation. Hon. Robert Nanima emphasised that the decisions of the Committee affirm important normative standards, cater for policy change, and address practices of violations of children's rights. Furthermore, the decisions offer remedies for the named victim/s in a communication ensuring accountability and serve as a notice to other States who may find themselves in similar situations as in the Communications dealt by the Committee. He, however, noted the gaps in implementation of the Committee's decisions and shared that the Committee has been conducting follow-ups, implementation hearings and country visits, among other initiatives, to follow up on implementation of its decisions. He acknowledged that despite these initiatives, progress in implementation remains delayed, thereby impacting children who do not have timely access to remedies. He concluded by highlighting that NHRIs and CSOs are key stakeholders in this process, given their complementary and monitoring responsibilities to monitor compliance, report on the status of implementation, and engage with States Parties, among others.

201. The opening remarks were followed by a presentation by Opal Masocha Sibanda, Legal Researcher at the ACERWC Secretariat, on the Sources of Decisions and

Recommendations of the Committee and Engagement Modalities for Implementation. Ms Opal started by highlighting that most of the functions of the Committee in the exercise of its mandate provided in the Charter entail decisions and recommendations for Member States. She highlighted the various sources of the Committee's decisions, namely communications, concluding observations and recommendations; country visits; resolutions; letters of urgent appeal; and AU policy organs' decisions. She highlighted that following each of the above-mentioned activities and initiatives, the Committee issues decisions and recommendations which provide action points for State Parties to rectify the main issues of concern raised by the Committee, which form the sources of decision that require subsequent monitoring of implementation.

202. Regarding the engagement modalities for implementation, she highlighted that the Committee uses several structured modalities to track, support, and encourage implementation of its decisions and recommendations. These include appointing a rapporteur to follow up on implementation; requiring State Parties to submit implementation reports within 180 days of receipt of a decision on merits of a communication; conducting implementation hearings; reporting to the AU Executive Council on non-implementation; conducting follow up missions; using the state party reporting procedure to follow up on implementation; and establishing a Working Group on Implementation of Decisions in 2020 as a special mechanism to monitor progress made in implementation of all its decisions and recommendations by Member States. She concluded by highlighting the crucial role to be played by NHRIs and CSOs in the implementation of the ACERWC's decisions, namely awareness raising about the decisions of the Committee; engagement with national stakeholders; using the ACERWC decisions for advocacy and action; providing update to the Committee through reports, during follow-up visits, and sessions; engaging with the affected children/groups to monitor implementation; facilitating discussions between the parties with respect to compensation; and including the implementation of decisions of the Committee by the government in their reports, studies and other publications

203. Ms Sibongile Mokapane, Child Rights Promotion Assistant, ACERWC Secretariat, gave a Snapshot of Girls' Rights Cases and Related Jurisprudence of the ACERWC. The presentation provided a comprehensive overview of ACERWC jurisprudence on girls' rights, examining key communications and normative frameworks. Ms Mokapane delved into how the Committee has addressed critical cases that establish important precedents for protecting girls from discrimination, harmful practices, and violence. Notable landmark decisions include the Tanzania case on pregnant girls' right to education, the Sudan cases on sexual violence and abuse, and cases from Mali and Botswana addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. These communications demonstrate that girls face unique intersectional challenges, including child marriage, female genital mutilation, barriers to education, gender-based violence, and compounded discrimination based on disability, ethnicity, poverty, or displacement status.

204. Beyond individual case law, the Committee has developed comprehensive normative frameworks to guide states in protecting girls' rights. These include the 2017 Joint General Comment on Ending Child Marriage, the 2023 Joint General Comment on Female Genital Mutilation, General Comment No. 9 on the Right to Education, the 2022 Continental Study on Teenage Pregnancy, and General Comment No. 10 on

children without parental care. She highlighted that there are some gaps and challenges to realising these strides into realities, and closing these gaps requires sustained political commitment, adequate resources, stronger enforcement mechanisms, and genuine multistakeholder collaboration to bring about transformation.

Role of NHRIs in the Implementation of ACERWC Decisions

205. Prof. James Mouangue Kobila, President of the Cameroon National Human Rights Institution, began his presentation by noting that Cameroon had recently appeared before the ACERWC, which ordered the State to pay US\$50,000 in compensation. Although the government has not yet released the funds, he explained that it is currently supporting the child's educational needs. He highlighted that the Human Rights Commission now has a dedicated focal person for African Union organs, responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of decisions issued by African human rights mechanisms. Addressing how the government is enforcing the Committee's decisions, Professor Kobila explained that the Commission has established a mechanism that allows all relevant stakeholders to raise issues, review communications, and examine decisions against the government before reaching a domestic resolution. He added that the government has operationalised a working group specifically tasked with practical implementation. He further noted that there are ongoing programmes to incentivise and sensitise academic institutions to strengthen knowledge on the implementation of regional decisions. The Commission also continues to lobby national authorities for judicial reforms that would enhance compliance. Professor Kobila concluded by reaffirming Cameroon's commitment to strengthening collaboration with the African Children's Committee and other regional and international partners to improve the implementation of ACERWC decisions.

206. Speaking on the role of National Human Rights Institutions in implementing ACERWC decisions, Dr Zoumana Diarra, Secretary General of the Mali NHRI, emphasised that Mali's work in protecting and promoting children's rights is grounded in the Paris Principles. He noted that there is currently one communication before the ACERWC involving a case of rape brought by an NGO. Dr. Diarra highlighted that Mali has an established consultative framework with civil society, which it continues to use to strengthen the implementation of the Committee's decisions. Through collaboration with civil society and other partners, the NHRI is also contributing to legislative reforms aimed at enhancing compliance with regional child rights standards. He further explained that the adoption of Mali's new constitution in 2023 represents a significant milestone in advancing children's rights. The country has also increased criminal penalties for perpetrators of child trafficking and sexual offences, in order to better protect children and other vulnerable groups. Despite these positive steps, Dr. Diarra acknowledged ongoing challenges, particularly limited capacity among civil society actors and stakeholders within the justice system. He noted that Mali has established a one-stop GBV centre to improve the management of gender-based violence cases. Additionally, the government is in the process of operationalising a dedicated working group responsible for overseeing the implementation of treaties and decisions issued by treaty bodies.

207. Mr. Fadhili Ferdinand Muganyizi of the Tanzania NHRI began by referencing a communication before the ACERWC concerning a girl who had been expelled from

school due to pregnancy. He noted that Tanzania has initiated a process of aligning its domestic laws with international human rights standards, including reforms to the Marriage Act. The Commission has recommended that Parliament expedite these reforms to strengthen the protection of children's rights. He explained that the Commission has formally advised the government to end the expulsion of pregnant girls from schools, emphasising that such practices violate the Constitution of Tanzania. To support broader implementation of regional decisions, the Commission has introduced workshops and capacity-building programmes aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of state obligations. Mr. Muganyizi added that a dedicated complaints-handling desk has been established to oversee the implementation of decisions from treaty bodies. He highlighted that several national workshops on sexual and reproductive health rights have already been conducted. Additionally, the Commission has completed an assessment of Tanzania's compliance with the Maputo Protocol, particularly in relation to legislative alignment. He acknowledged that gender-based violence and harmful cultural practices continue to pose significant challenges in the country. The Commission has therefore advised the government to integrate child rights protections throughout the legislative process. He concluded by reaffirming Tanzania's commitment to continued collaboration with the African Children's Committee to enhance the implementation of its decisions.

208. Following the presentations, a plenary session was held during which several important concerns were raised. Participants emphasised that member states must treat the Committee's decisions with utmost seriousness and ensure that follow-up actions are firmly grounded in the best interests of the child. It was also highlighted that, although NHRIs hold affiliate status with the Committee, meaningful implementation of its decisions requires strong political will at the national level. Furthermore, participants observed that the political appointment of NHRIs' leadership in some member states can hinder effective implementation, underscoring the need for greater independence and accountability within these institutions.

Reflections on the Coordination of NHRIs with Government Actors in the implementation of decisions

209. Regarding the topic of supporting the implementation of decisions, Mr Foluso Adegalu, from NANHRI, submitted that NANHRI was working on the institutionalisation of the implementation of decisions. He stated that the idea was for each NHRI to have a department focused on implementation and to have an implementation focal point designated. He argued that there is a need for tripartite engagement amongst the NHRI, the victim, and the State party. He also highlighted that their other function of this implementation team is to keep up to date with the new jurisprudence. He also indicated that the NANHRI has ensured that at every activity regarding implementation, they have a representative from the AU Treaty bodies. On recommendations, Mr Adegalu stated that there was a need for collaboration with the Committee on the amendment of the Guidelines on the implementation of decisions.

210. Ms Fatou Thiam, from Senegal NHRI, shared that children constitute half of the population of Senegal, and so this made the imperative of implementation of decisions ever so critical. She shared that their Commission could support better implementation of decisions if there was stronger collaboration, and they could know about new decisions as they come. She shared that they had supported multiple legislative

reforms in the improvement of the rights and welfare of children in Senegal. She highlighted that their Commission suffered from a lack of adequate budget. She shared that their Commission had a partnership with the Parliament in Senegal and also worked very closely with the Bureau of Statistics. She highlighted, however, that there was a need to set up a mechanism for monitoring and implementation. She also spoke about the pending implementation of the Committee's decision in the Talibés Case.

211. Mr Winston Mwafulirwa, Malawi NHRI, submitted that when the Commission received the Concluding Observations in 2021, they scheduled a meeting with the Minister and were appointed to co-chair the task force on the implementation of the Concluding Observations. Similarly, ahead of the implementation of the Amicable Settlement, they were tasked to co-Chair the task force to oversee the legislative amendments. He shared that they engage with the various child rights CSOs on all their work. Mr Mwafulirwa emphasised that engagement with their line ministry has been very necessary and has been the reason for prioritisation in the work of the government on implementation and on children's rights in general.

212. Ms Veronicah Wambui Mwangi, Kenya NHR, shared that they were part of the national Technical Working group responsible for the preparation of the Kenyan Periodic report. She also shared that, having been granted affiliate status, they would be submitting a report to the Committee. Miss Mwangi submitted further that the NHRI advocated for the preparation of birth registration forms with gender markers for intersex children and advocated for the treatment of children accompanying mothers to prison. She also indicated that the Commission supported the implementation of the decision of the Committee in the case of IHRDA v Kenya. She informed the audience that there were still challenges in the implementation of the Committee's decision in the Nubian children's Case. She recommended that the Committee strengthen their collaboration with NHRIs through the focal points for implementation and also have capacity building for implementation.

213. Ms Ipeleng J. Makaba, Botswana NHRI, began by reflecting that the setting up of the Ombudsman's office was in line with the Concluding observations issued by the Committee to Botswana in 2023. In the 2 years of their existence, Ms Makaba shared that their staff have been trained by the Centre for Human Rights as well as on an exchange visit to the Namibian NHRI. She indicated that they had also established a Thematic task force on gender. Ms Makaba added that they are a member of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, which is responsible for the implementation of decisions. She also informed the participants of the inter-office coordination with academia, CSO, government departments, as well as other independent and oversight bodies, which contributed towards ease of implementation. Ms Makaba concluded by highlighting that the Ombudsman's office was working towards introducing a children's advocate into their office.

ITEM 31 : Technical workshop with CSOs on implementation of decisions and girls' rights

214. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), as part of its 46th Ordinary Session, convened a panel discussion on “**Technical Workshop with CSOs on the Implementation of Decisions and Girls’ Rights.**” The session was moderated by Hon. Anne Muiswa, a member of the Working Group on the Implementation of Decisions.

215. **Mr. Chris Muthuri**, Deputy Regional Director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI), opened the session by setting the scene on the role of CSOs in the implementation of decisions, thanking the Committee for convening the discussion and recalling the important issue raised in the engagement with NHRIs. He underscored that once the ACERWC issues a decision, implementation is not automatic, making the contribution of CSOs indispensable. He mentioned that CSOs act as the “hands” that follow up on decisions by providing complementary support to stakeholders, monitoring government actions and inaction, advocating for reforms, and using the Committee’s decisions as a foundation for policy change and community awareness. He also future highlighted the value of CSO-led capacity building for judges, prosecutors and police, the strength of collective voices, and the strategic use of litigation to advance children’s rights. He concluded by stressing that implementation is a marathon that demands patience, sustained engagement, and coordinated action from all actors, with CSOs expected to take the lead in driving these efforts.

216. **Mr. Girma Gadisa**, Senior Technical Officer, ACPF, highlighted ACPF’s continent-wide efforts to advance child rights especially the rights of girls by strengthening the capacity of governments and civil society, promoting gender equality, providing amicus curie brief and ensuring wider use of the ACERWC’s protection and Communications mandates. He explained that ACPF integrates the Committee’s jurisprudence into its research, advocacy, and training initiatives, drawing on key resources such as Getting Girls Equal, the African Report on Child Wellbeing, and the Committee’s Teenage Pregnancy Study. He mentioned that although ACPF actively raises awareness and builds capacity on the Communications Procedure, many CSOs remain unaware of these mechanisms, limiting their engagement and follow-up on decisions. He also underscored that implementation challenges ranging from weak coordination and limited political will to insufficient financing for children and prolonged conflict reflect broader systemic barriers to enforcing the African Children’s Charter. To strengthen implementation, he proposed national assessment forums, cross-country learning platforms, and deeper inclusion of CSOs at all levels, reaffirming ACPF’s commitment to supporting states and partners to accelerate meaningful follow-up on ACERWC decisions.

217. **Mr. Mwila Malama**, Senior Child Rights Advocacy Campaigns Advisor at Save the Children, explained that Save the Children integrates ACERWC decisions and the African Children’s Charter into its programmes and advocacy across Africa. He highlighted the ACCP project implemented with partners such as ACPF, Plan International, and the Dullah Omar Institute as a practical example of embedding the Committee’s decisions into programming. He noted that the organization works closely with governments to domesticate ACERWC recommendations into national laws and policies, especially in education, protection from harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Citing Resolution 18 on climate change, he showed how the Com-

mittee's guidance has informed government commitments in Zambia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, and Kenya, with special attention to the vulnerabilities of girls. He added that the Committee's decisions shape Save the Children's advocacy, including on the upcoming general comment on education, and highlighted initiatives such as the costing framework for ending child marriage piloted in Zambia and Sierra Leone. He concluded by stressing persistent challenges weak enforcement, limited capacity, inadequate funding and called for stronger national accountability frameworks, better integration of ACERWC decisions into domestic law, increased resources, and closer collaboration between the Committee and NHRIs.

218. **Mr. Cleophas Maragia Angwenyi**, Director of Plan International AU Liaison Office, equated the Committee's decisions to a "baby," emphasizing that their implementation is a gradual process requiring patience, nurturing, and active support. He noted that while some decisions generate strong momentum, others remain quiet precisely where CSOs must step in. He highlighted the diverse expertise CSOs bring, including technical support, lobbying, drafting, and in-country engagement. Awareness raising among children and communities, he stressed, is an integral part of ensuring decisions take root. CSOs also play a key role in follow-up, reminding authorities of their obligations and ensuring accountability through reports and sustained engagement. He acknowledged challenges such as resistance from some stakeholders, budget constraints, and the slow pace of reforms. He concluded by encouraging actors to treat the Committee's decisions as precedents and to work toward integrating them into domestic laws and policies.

219. **Mr. Ibrahima Amadou Maïga**, representing the Mali CSO Coalition, highlighted the crucial role of civil society networks such as AFDPDM and WACHILD in advancing the implementation of ACERWC decisions in West Africa. He noted that awareness and ownership of the Committee's decisions remain limited in many countries, including Mali, due to weak institutional capacity, inadequate resources, and security and political challenges. He acknowledged progress in Mali such as constitutional recognition of children's rights and stronger institutional cooperation but stressed that CSO coalitions remain central in community sensitization, advocacy, legislative reform, and accountability initiatives like the Espace interpellation Démocratique. Collaboration with NHRIs and other actors, he explained, is essential for data-sharing and coordinated follow-up. He also underscored the coalition's strong focus on girls' rights, including efforts on early marriage, Gender based violence, education, and access to justice through legal orientation committees and mobile clinics. He concluded by calling for stronger national commitment, better-resourced child-protection systems, coordinated action, and sustained attention to the needs of girls, reminding participants that implementing ACERWC decisions is a moral obligation to safeguard the future of every child.

220. **Mr. Ombeni Bethuel Kimaro**, speaking on behalf of the Tanzania CSO Coalition, outlined how the Tanzania Child Rights Forum (TCRF) supports the implementation of ACERWC decisions through coordinated advocacy, capacity building, and strengthened monitoring and reporting systems. He explained that while TCRF works closely with government, private sector actors, and international partners, challenges persist such as limited political will, donor-dependent child-protection budgets, and irregular State reporting cycles. CSOs help close these gaps by submitting alternative

reports, supporting communications to the ACERWC, and empowering children to prepare independent reports and hold authorities accountable. He mentioned ongoing constraints, including insufficient resources, weak information systems, and shrinking civic space. Looking ahead, he called for stronger legal and policy reforms, increased government investment in monitoring, a national plan of action to follow up ACERWC decisions and reduced bureaucratic delays. He urged the government to allocate adequate funding and adhere to reporting cycles to ensure that ACERWC decisions are effectively implemented and sustained.

221. Mr. Benedict Omillo, representing the CSO Forum, appreciated the questions raised and emphasized that implementation of ACERWC decisions must always be understood within each country's context some require budgetary investment, others legal or policy reforms, while others simply need continued reminders and follow-up. He highlighted the Forum's biannual convenings, which provide space for CSOs to reflect on decisions, contextualize them, and design national strategies. He stressed the importance of collaboration with diverse stakeholders to support implementation missions, mobilize national coalitions, integrate ACERWC decisions into national programming, and amplify the Committee's work. CSOs, he said, play a key role in tracking implementation, documenting compliance and non-compliance, and feeding this information back through reports, policy briefs, and engagements with parliamentary committees and ACERWC. While CSOs remain impartial, their work inevitably touches political and economic sectors, making it essential to bring government, private sector, and community actors together. He also mentioned that CSOs actively support national coalitions in State Party reporting and contribute to broader multi-stakeholder engagement on implementation of decisions.

222. Dr. Musa Kika, Executive Director of IHRDA, highlighted IHRDA's active use of the ACERWC's communications procedure, noting that the organization has filed ten communications by which six of them focused on girls' rights. He observed, however, that implementation remains poorly understood, as reflected in several States' failure to submit timely follow-up reports. Ahead of the session, IHRDA sought updates on implementation status and engaged the Committee on progress made. Dr. Musa underscored IHRDA's efforts to strengthen systems that support effective implementation, including national-level dialogues and an upcoming synthesis report on litigations. He pointed to the Committee's requirement that States report within 180 days after recommendations as an essential enforcement tool, citing Malawi's consistent quarterly updates as a positive example. He stressed that while the Committee holds primary responsibility for oversight, CSOs and NHRIs play a crucial complementary role and must remain actively engaged. He concluded by warning that non-implementation or delays deny children their rights, and emphasized the need for continued support to States, regular reporting, and greater transparency to ensure meaningful accountability.

223. **Ms. Sally Ncube**, Regional Representative for Southern Africa at Equality Now, emphasized the crucial role of CSOs in supporting States to fulfil their obligations under the African Children's Charter. She noted that Equality Now advances this work through strategic communications submitted to the ACERWC, with several decisions still pending. She highlighted access to justice for trafficked children as a key priority, underscoring the need for multi-sectoral coordination and better access to information

at national and community levels to clarify the roles of duty bearers. Ms. Sally also identified major challenges, including the financial burdens placed on survivors, and stressed the importance of drawing on regional and international mechanisms to strengthen national efforts. Her recommendations included developing standardized implementation guidelines, securing dedicated resources to support victims during investigations, strengthening national structures, and ensuring that domestic laws and policies align with the Charter and international standards. She concluded by calling for stronger state accountability systems, noting that these mechanisms are continually tested and must be reinforced to remain effective.

224. **Ms. Aacha Sharon Ojema**, from the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS–Sudan), described the organization’s work in advancing implementation of the African Children’s Charter through strategic litigation. She noted that ACJPS had submitted three communications to the ACERWC two focused on girls’ rights with two cases already finalized. A key success involved challenging a discriminatory provision on child statelessness, where the Committee ruled in favor of the communication and recommended reforms that Sudan implemented following sustained advocacy. She also highlighted a second case from 2020 concerning the wrongful use of puberty to deny a rape survivor her status as a child; although the Committee issued corrective recommendations, these have yet to be implemented, raising concerns about recurring judicial misinterpretations. Ms. Aacha noted the resistance encountered from the Government of Sudan during litigation but stressed that persistent engagement eventually secured progress in some cases.

225. During the open floor session, Committee members and participants reflected on the concrete steps needed to strengthen implementation of ACERWC decisions, including concluding observations and recommendations. Participants stressed the importance of CSOs having clear timelines for State Party reporting and follow-up, noting that delays directly harm children “justice delayed is justice denied” as they grow without benefiting from decisions intended to protect them. Participants emphasized that implementation requires continuous, active support to States, and that dialogue must remain open. They also underscored that the Committee is not a court of law but a constructive platform for engagement, where governments often highlight progress while CSOs help identify gaps through communications and monitoring. The discussion acknowledged persistent challenges, especially political will, reinforcing the need for diverse CSO voices working across different issues to build pressure and complement each other’s strengths. Participants called for stronger lobbying, collaboration, and consistent use of the Charter as the core reference point, as well as joint efforts in contexts requiring collective action. CSOs were urged to strengthen survivor support systems, particularly for victims of violence and sexual exploitation.

226. In closing, the Moderator reaffirmed that implementation is a continuous process requiring coordinated efforts from all stakeholders and emphasized that CSOs should take the lead working with sustained commitment and in close collaboration with NHRIs, government bodies, and partner organizations.

227. The panel on child participation was chaired by the Vice-Chair of the Committee in the presence of the honorable members of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as representatives of the State and civil society.

Presentation of the Operational Protocol for the Implementation of Child Participation

228. The presentation of the Protocol focused on the following points: It was emphasized that this initiative is builded on more than 30 years of experience of the MAEJT. More than 200 children from various organizations across the continent shared and capitalized on their best practices in child participation. Their contribution helped to highlight the key points of truly effective participation, which form the basis of the guide.

229. The main challenges to participate in were reiterated, including:

- the challenge of inclusiveness,
- legislative and political constraints,
- cultural factors,
- gender inequalities,
- the adult/child dichotomy.

230. It was noted that current documents on child participation do not sufficiently address the operational dimension of participation as a structured process. For example, the African Committee's Guidelines on Child Participation (2021) focus primarily on the modalities of children's participation in the Committee's activities.

231. The Protocol for the Implementation of Child Participation, intended for representatives and decision-makers involved in child participation (governments, community actors, local elected officials, technical officials, NGOs, etc.), is divided into eight standards: Identification and mapping of child-led groups and organizations; Preparation and acceptance of children by stakeholders; Establishment of spaces for participation; Informing and training child-led groups and organizations on the right to participation; Providing access to information on opportunities, spaces, and topics for decision-making concerning children; Enabling children to make decisions about their participation; Implementing activities and strategies for real and effective participation; Integrating learning and continuously improving the process.

232. As an educational tool inspired by the experiences of children's groups and organizations in Africa, it was strongly recommended that representatives of member states take ownership of the guide, make the necessary amendments, and continue to advocate with the Committee and regional bodies whose mandate is to realize children's rights in order to encourage its adoption by Member States and strengthen the effective participation of children. This is because it is a tool that facilitates the self-

organization of young people on the continent, but also the accountability of States towards this primary resource of Africa.

233. Participants welcomed the document, which was considered a long-awaited methodological framework. Some questions were raised, notably the importance of community acceptance criteria and the continuous nature of participation, which must begin within the family and community before gradually expanding. The responses provided were based on the Standard, which provides for the prior agreement of the protagonists, particularly at the community level.

234. The Chair of the panel summarized the discussions and expressed his appreciation for the initiative, emphasizing its importance for the continuation of the work and the gradual ownership of the document.

ITEM 33 : Panel Discussion on the status of implementation of the decisions of the ACERWC on Communication No 013/Com/001/2020 against Republic of Mali and Communication No 006/Com/002/2015 against the Republic of Cameroon

Introduction and setting of panel objectives-ACERWC Secretariat

235. The Panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Ayalew Getachew, Ag. Executive Secretary of the ACERWC Secretariat. He introduced the panel and noted that the objective of the panel discussion is to review implementation of the decisions of the Committee on Communication No. 006/COM/002/2015 The Institute for Human Right and Development in Africa and Finders Group Initiative on behalf of TFA (a minor) V. The Government of Republic of Cameroon and Communication No. 013/COM/001/2020 APDF and IHRDA on behalf of AS a minor against the Republic of Mali.

Presentation of Elements of the decision of the Committee on Communication No. 006/Com/002/2015 against the Republic of Cameroon

236. Hon. Joseph Sunday Sinnah; Country Rapporteur of the ACERWC, presented the elements of the decision of the ACERWC on Communication No. 006/COM/002/2015 concerning the Republic of Cameroon, submitted on behalf of a child victim, TFA. He recalled that the case concerned repeated rape of a 10-year-old girl and the failure of national authorities to conduct a prompt, effective, and child-sensitive investigation. Despite medical confirmation of the assault and identification of the alleged perpetrator, the police and judicial authorities did not take necessary steps to pursue the case. Instead, the matter stagnated for years, and the examining magistrate dismissed the evidence without providing the victim or her representatives the opportunity to appeal, thereby denying access to justice. These circumstances formed the basis of the alleged violations brought before the Committee.

237. Hon Sinnah recalled the findings of the Committee, noting that Cameroon violated Articles 1, 3, and 16 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. He noted that the State failed in its obligation to exercise due diligence to investigate the crime and prosecute the perpetrator, amounting to a breach of Article

1 on State obligations. The sexual violence committed against TFA was recognized as a form of gender-based discrimination, engaging Article 3 on non-discrimination. Furthermore, the Committee underscored that rape constitutes one of the gravest forms of inhuman and degrading treatment, thereby triggering a violation of Article 16. The Committee reiterated that States bear an obligation of result, not merely one of procedural diligence, in ensuring justice for victims of child rights violations.

238. Hon Sinnah reiterated the recommendations of the Committee to the Government of Cameroon, which include ensuring the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrator, providing TFA with appropriate remedy and compensation, strengthening legislation against all forms of violence, including sexual violence against children, and building the capacity of police, prosecutors, judges, and relevant institutions on child-sensitive procedures. Additionally, the Committee had recommended the establishment of specialized units and courts for cases involving violence against children, ensure psychosocial and protective services for child victims, and implement public education campaigns aimed at addressing harmful norms and practices that perpetuate violence.

239. Hon Sinnah recalled that an implementation hearing was held during the 37th Ordinary Session of the ACERWC, where the Committee was able to observe the implementation of some of the recommendations of the ACERWC, such as the training of judiciary and steps taken in prosecuting the perpetrator. Moreover, other key aspects of the recommendations were not implemented, including the order of payment of compensation to TFA, the amendment of the relevant laws and the establishment of child friendly court. Furthermore, while the perpetrator was prosecuted and sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment, the sentence was appealed, and the result of that appeal is not yet disclosed to the Committee. He concluded by recalling that the Republic of Cameroon did not respond to the request of the Committee to undertake follow-up mission.

Implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Communication No. 006/Com/002/2015 against the Republic of Cameroon

Representative of the Government of Cameroon

240. Mme. Tjeck Rachel Victoire, Deputy Director for Child Protection at Ministry of Social Affairs of Cameroon, made a presentation on the measures taken to implement the ACERWC's decision in TFA v. Cameroon. The perpetrator of the violence against TFA was prosecuted and convicted to 12 years' imprisonment, with an award of 10 million CFA in damages, though the case remains on appeal, while the defendant remains detained pending the finalization of the appeal. Regarding the recommendation of payment of compensation to TFA, it was noted that the Inter-ministerial Committee for monitoring the implementation of recommendations and/or decisions of international and regional mechanisms tasked with the promotion and protection of Human Rights is still following up with the Ministry of Finance to implement the recommendation.

241. The State also highlighted institutional and legislative developments, including the adoption of a national child protection policy, action plans against harmful practices, and circulars enabling pregnant students to remain in school. Capacity building programs for police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, and other frontline actors have been expanded, alongside the establishment of gender and child desks within police and gendarmerie structures, the launch of the national child protection hotline (116), and the introduction of the CPIMS+ information system. The government also provided psychosocial and educational support directly to TFA, enabling her continued schooling.

242. Despite these advances, Cameroon acknowledged persistent challenges. Budget constraints hinder the establishment of specialized courts and the broader rollout of training initiatives. Implementation of recommendations, particularly compensation payments and expansion of specialized services, remains slow due to administrative and financial limitations. The government also noted challenges in ensuring adequate coverage of capacity-building initiatives and gaps in infrastructure necessary for nationwide specialized child protection services.

243. Looking forward, Cameroon affirmed its commitment to continued cooperation with the Committee and recognized remaining actions, including finalizing compensation procedures, strengthening specialized justice mechanisms, enhancing training and prevention campaigns, and supporting a potential follow-up mission by the Committee. The government committed to prioritizing implementation efforts and improving coordination across ministries to ensure full compliance with the Committee's recommendations.

Presentation of elements of the decision of the Committee on Communication N°: 0013/Com/001/2020 against Republic of Mali

244. Hon. Ghislain Roch Estan, Country Rapporteur of the ACERWC for the Republic of Mali presented the elements of the decision of the ACERWC on Communication No. 013/COM/001/2020 submitted against the Republic of Mali. He recalled that the Communication concerns the case of an 11-year-old girl (AS) who was raped by an adult man, and for whom judicial proceedings stalled for several years without adequate investigation or protection measures. The Committee recalled that it had delivered its decision on the merits in December 2022, finding Mali in violation of Articles 1(1), 3, 4(1) and 16 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child due to failures in preventing the violation, conducting a prompt and effective investigation, prosecuting and sanctioning the perpetrator, and ensuring protection and redress for the child victim. It was noted that the Government of Mali has not yet submitted the implementation report that was due in December 2024.

245. Hon Estan reiterated the key obligations and recommendations issued to Mali. These include, ensuring the effective prosecution and punishment of the perpetrator; providing AS with full reparations, including fair compensation; guaranteeing immediate medical, psychological and social support; and revising the Criminal Procedure Code to ensure child-sensitive investigation timelines in cases of sexual violence. The Committee also recalled its recommendations requiring the

establishment of free and accessible reporting mechanisms for children, improved coordination among government institutions, and strengthened national policies and services addressing sexual and gender-based violence. Further, the Committee urged Mali to align its laws with the ACERWC, develop training programmes for police, prosecutors and judges on child-sensitive justice, and consider the creation of specialized courts or procedures adapted to children.

246. Finally, Hon Estan urged Mali to submit, without delay, its overdue report on measures taken to implement the decision, in accordance with Section XXII of the Revised Guidelines on Communications. The Committee expressed its readiness to continue engaging constructively with the State Party to ensure full compliance with the decision and to secure justice and protection for the child victim.

Implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Communication N°: 0013/Com/001/2020 against Republic of Mali

247. Mr. Kokè Coulibaly, Deputy Public Prosecutor at the Court of Appeal of Bamako, Mali, made a presentation during which he outlined the progress made in implementing the ACERWC decision in AS v. Mali. It was noted that the perpetrator was convicted to 10 years' imprisonment. With regards to the reparations for AS, it was noted that the Government could not locate and contact her, despite efforts made to do so, including through one of the applicants, APDF. The representative underlined that even though AS did not appear in court to present her case, she still has the option of asking the Court to order the perpetrator to pay her damages in compensation for the harm she suffered and affirmed the commitment on the side of the Government to get in touch with AS to implement the measures for reparation. It was further noted that measures were taken with regards to reforms in the justice sector. These include revisions of the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code in 2024 providing greater guarantees of effective access to justice, the establishment of criminal chambers to accelerate proceedings, and recruitment and training of over 500 magistrates. Mali has also strengthened institutional structures for child protection, including the creation of the National Directorate of Child Judicial Protection with a view to strengthen the system for supporting child victims and witnesses. It was also mentioned the adoption of Law No. 2024-030 of 13 December 2024 on the judicial organization of the Republic of Mali. Article 45 of this law concerns juvenile courts, which are composed of a children's judge, a children's court, the juvenile criminal chamber of the High Court, the special juvenile chamber of the Court of Appeal, and the juvenile investigation control chamber. A Children's Court has been established for the District of Bamako. In addition, each High Court has a specialized chamber for juvenile matters. Mali also has a Child Protection Code, and both the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure contain provisions that protect children and set out the special procedures applicable to them. Furthermore, the government has expanded holistic services for survivors of gender-based violence through 20 operational One Stop Centers offering legal, medical, psychosocial, and socio-economic support. Additional mechanisms such as the national GBV hotline (80333), village alert committees, and harmonized child protection case management tools demonstrate broad national efforts to address violence against children.

248. Mr. Coulibaly also highlighted a series of challenges hindering full implementation. These include security constraints in many regions limiting access to

services, insufficient availability of child-specialized judges and social workers, and logistical barriers affecting the functioning of reporting and alert systems. Difficulties in the participation of the victim in the compensation process have also slowed implementation of certain recommendations. He further noted administrative limitations affecting the production of periodic reports and coordination across ministries, citing gaps in data collection and instability among ministerial focal points. As a way forward, the representative of Mali committed to strengthening institutional capacity, including reforms to reinforce the CIMERAP reporting mechanism, expanding specialized justice structures for children, scaling up the One Stop Center model, and enhancing community awareness and prevention systems. The Government also emphasized its intention to integrate the Committee's recommendations into ongoing national reforms and to continue engaging constructively with the ACERWC to ensure improved protection and access to justice for all children.

Reflection and Discussion on the implementation of the Recommendations in the decision

249. Following the presentations, Members of the Committee and applicants present in the session made several reflections and posed questions to the representatives of the Governments of Mali and Cameroon. The Members of the Committee reiterated that it has been ten years since the violation of TFA's rights in Cameroon, emphasizing the urgent need to expedite both the finalization of judicial proceedings and the payment of compensation, given the gravity of the harm suffered and prolonged proceedings for reparation. The Government of Cameroon informed the Committee that the judicial process remains pending on appeal and that the Inter-ministerial Committee continues to follow the case closely to ensure accountability. The Government further noted that follow-up with the Ministry of Finance is ongoing to affect the payment of compensation. Regarding Mali, the Committee welcomed the 10-year sentence issued against the perpetrator in the AS case but expressed concern over the inability to locate the victim, seeking clarity on mechanisms and timelines for the submission of a formal report. The Government of Mali explained ongoing difficulties in contacting the victim and expressed regret that the applicants had not maintained contact with her to facilitate reparations, while committing to submit a formal report through appropriate diplomatic channels upon return to Mali.

250. Committee Members raised additional concerns and questions to both States. Members stressed the need for Cameroon to ensure sustained psychosocial support to mitigate risks of traumatization and encouraged both States to undertake all outstanding measures without delay. The Committee urged Mali to intensify efforts to locate the child, noting that the matter has been pending since 2020. Members also requested clarification on how progress in protecting children from sexual violence is being measured, given the numerous legislative and institutional reforms introduced. One of the applicants, IHRDA, expressed appreciation for the efforts made by both governments while seeking clarification from Cameroon regarding the Committee's pending requests for a follow-up mission, and enquiring whether the State has taken steps to provide a legal framework for specialized police units and tribunals. IHRDA

also committed to supporting efforts to locate the child in the Mali case to facilitate implementation of reparations.

251. In their final reflections, the representative of Cameroon highlighted that the Ministry of Social Affairs continues to provide holistic psychosocial support to TFA, including educational assistance which was done up to the completion of her diploma. The Government reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the Committee's decision and strengthening national child protection measures. On the matter of a follow-up visit, it was noted that the request has been transmitted to the Office of the President of Cameroon, and the Ministry awaits guidance. The representative of Mali recalled the expedited judicial process undertaken in the AS case and affirmed that the establishment of One-Stop Centers reflects the Government's broader efforts to support victims of violence. The representative of Mali further affirmed its willingness to continue implementing the Committee's decision using existing national mechanisms and encouraged continued collaboration with the Committee and the applicants to ensure reparations are delivered. The delegation also indicated that the implementation report will be submitted to the Committee shortly.

ITEM 34 : Draft Presentation of the General Comment on Article 28 on Drug Abuse

252. Dr Aderomola Adeola, Consultant for the development of the General Comment on Article 28, presented a preliminary draft of the document. She recalled the significant work already undertaken by the Committee, and briefly outlined the provisions of Article 28, noting that it requires States Parties to take all appropriate measures to protect the child from the use of narcotics and the illicit use of psychotropic substances as defined in relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the production and trafficking of such substances. She added that the scope and legal basis of Article 28 are grounded in the Charter but there is also a similar provision in the UNCRC, as well as relevant UN drug control conventions, the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention, the Common African Position, and national frameworks across the continent. While many countries have made significant strides in establishing laws and norms on drug abuse, she observed fragmentation at the national level, including situations where children are not explicitly mentioned or are insufficiently addressed.

253. Dr Adeola provided a contextual analysis reflected in the General Comment. She referred to data from the Pan-African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use, noting that between 2016 and 2021, nearly 70% of individuals seeking treatment for drug use disorders were aged 15 to 34, and that one in twenty individuals treated for substance use disorders were aged 10 to 14 years. She noted an uptick in these figures across national contexts but emphasised the need for more robust and detailed data. She then clarified what the General Comment refers to when speaking of drug abuse, highlighting cannabis (marijuana, hashish, hash oil, also known as pot, weed, hash, ganja, zol, boom, spliff, and grass); methcathinone (a synthetic analogue of cathinone found in khat, consumed as powder, pills or capsules); amphetamine-type stimulants such as MDMA (ecstasy and Molly) and methamphetamine (crystal meth); benzodiazepines including Rophynol ('forget-me-pill') and diazepam; and opioids such as heroin, codeine, fentanyl, nitrosine, and tramadol. She also referenced other local

mixtures, including nyaope, a combination of low-grade heroin, marijuana, ARVs, rat poison and pool cleaner, and lizard dung, whose decomposed uric acid produces ammonia with psychoactive effects.

254. She highlighted that the General Comment clarifies key terms and phrases, including child, States Parties to the present Charter, narcotics, illicit use, psychotropic substances, relevant international treaties, production, and trafficking. A child is defined according to Article 2 of the Charter, while States Parties refers to all AU Member States that have ratified the Charter. Illicit use implies any usage contrary to relevant international or domestic law, unless permitted for medical or scientific purposes. Relevant international treaties include the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and its 1972 Protocol, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, the 1988 Convention on Illicit Traffic, and related instruments. She explained that production is described in a descriptive manner, including cultivating, manufacturing, mixing, refining, preparing, extracting and processing substances, capturing both known formulations and locally specific or traditional variants. She added that the General Comment reinforces the general principles of the Charter. Turning to state obligations, Dr Adeola highlighted two core elements reinforced in the General Comment. The first is the obligation to protect children from the use of narcotics and the illicit use of psychotropic substances, drawing on the Committee's jurisprudence and international human rights frameworks on the obligation to protect. This includes protection in both public and private spaces, with the State carrying significant responsibility in both contexts. The second obligation is to prevent the use of children in the production and trafficking of substances. She explained that drawing on ILO standards, the General Comment reinforces that this must be treated as one of the worst forms of child labour, which is categorically prohibited. While Article 28 is predominantly ex-ante in its phrasing, she added that the General Comment also recognises ex-post situations where exposure has already occurred, requiring solutions and interventions for child victims of substance abuse.

255. In this regard, the General Comment includes an auxiliary component covering treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration. Dr Adeola stressed that children must never be punished for drug use or involvement; instead, States Parties must prioritise diversionary programs and ensure access to rehabilitation services. She explained that the final part of the General Comment focuses on the need for states to explicitly outline the measures taken towards implementation, especially given the broad scope of the obligations elaborated. She stressed the importance of data collection and research, noting that while some data exists, it remains mixed and insufficiently robust across many countries. She also highlighted dissemination as an essential element, ensuring that the General Comment is widely shared and understood. Dr Adeola concluded by summarising key comments received by the Secretariat during the drafting process including the need to accommodate national classifications of narcotics and psychotropic substances; to make the general principles section more concise and to briefly indicate how each right referenced in relation to Article 28 links to the provision; incorporation of children requiring opioids for pain relief in cases of severe or chronic illnesses; and the inclusion of children born with addiction due to maternal drug use (neonatal abstinence syndrome). She also noted the importance of drawing synergies with other provisions of the Charter and related General Comments. Finally, she highlighted emerging intersectional issues, including climate change, eco-

anxiety, migration, and the experiences of farming communities, for consideration in the General Comment.

256. Following the presentation, the following questions and comments were raised: Drug abuse is driven by multiple and cross-cutting factors, with poverty and extreme poverty emerging as major contributors. It was observed that sometimes children/youth in such situations rely on temporary highs as a means of escape, and that exclusion, homelessness and unstable home environments further increase vulnerability. Questions were raised about how governments respond to this group of affected children, and it was stressed that States must identify vulnerable families, address root causes, provide education and life-skills alternatives, and ensure appropriate inclusion within social protection systems.

257. The need for clearer recommendations in the General Comment on prevention, early support and integrated interventions was highlighted. Strong emphasis was placed on prevention as a core pillar. Several cases were noted in which children as young as seven or eight had unknowingly consumed drugs through products such as cakes or sweets sold near schools, creating early addiction.

258. The relationship between drug use and the child justice system was also raised. In several contexts, children are exposed to drugs due to justice systems that are not child-friendly and that focus on punishment rather than diversion or rehabilitation. Instead of addressing root causes such as poverty or harmful environments, punitive approaches can exacerbate vulnerability. It was suggested that the General Comment should address the need for justice systems that are responsive to children's realities and supportive of rehabilitation rather than punishment.

259. Another concern related to the inability of individual States to address drug abuse effectively in the context of porous borders, population mobility and evolving trafficking strategies. Many States lack full control over border areas and face insecurity that facilitates cross-border drug movement. It was therefore proposed that a normative framework promoting cooperation between States is needed, including integrated systems that enable effective joint action across borders, as drug trafficking and the resulting harm to children cannot be addressed by States acting in isolation. It was proposed that the General Comment adopt the terminology 'drug and substance abuse,' noting that alcohol abuse is highly prevalent in many African countries. Data from one context shows the average age of initiation into alcohol consumption has fallen to 12 years, and that children account for over 70% of admissions to mental-health clinics. Despite legal restrictions on alcohol sales to children, alcohol remains widely accessible.

260. Economic dimensions were highlighted, including the involvement of older children living on the streets in producing and selling drugs and alcohol, while younger children become primary consumers. This dynamic can impede reintegration programs, as the potential economic returns from selling substances may outweigh those from vocational initiatives.

261. Mental health was identified as both a driver of substance use, where poor mental health leads to maladaptive coping, and a consequence, with increasing cases of alcohol- and substance-induced psychosis. The need for a holistic approach addressing poverty, economic incentives, mental health, and substance availability was stressed.

262. Mental health and psychological support were identified as essential but severely underdeveloped areas. It is often discussed without corresponding budget allocations or technical capacity, and in some contexts is treated as highly obscure or inaccessible. However, there was a strong recommendation proposed for the General Comment to reflect the aspect of mental health, as without this, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts will remain ineffective, and children will continue to suffer long-term impacts.

ITEM 35 : Presentation on the Digitalization of Birth Registration in Africa: Challenges and opportunities for children's rights

263. Ms. Samrawit Getaneh, Legal researcher at the Secretariat of the ACERWC, delivered a presentation on digitalization of birth registration in Africa. The presentation underscored that birth registration is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 6 of the ACERWC and a core aspiration of Agenda 2040, yet only 51% of children under the age five in Africa have their births registered, leaving nearly half “invisible” to State systems. It was highlighted that digitalization offers promising solutions to longstanding barriers in civil registration, if undertaken in a rights-based inclusive manner. Ms. Samrawit introduced the Committee's forthcoming Guidance Note entitled Guidance Note on the Digitalization of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics: With a Focus on Birth Registration in Africa. The document maps emerging trends, challenges and opportunities and provides a set of key recommendations to State Parties and other stakeholders.

264. Some of the emerging trends highlighted in the presentation include online registration platforms, mobile registration units, and early-stage experimental tools including connected bracelets, Self-Sovereign Identity (SSI) technologies, and AI-supported birth detection. In the presentation she analyzed both the opportunities and risks associated with digital transformation. Benefits include improved accessibility, reduced costs, increased accuracy, integration with health and education systems, and the potential for real-time data flows that strengthen planning and service delivery. However, the presenter noted that digitalization carries significant structural and systemic risks if not implemented intentionally. Challenges include weak infrastructure, fragmented or donor-driven digital systems, limited interoperability, insufficient legal frameworks to support digital records, and inadequate data protection safeguards, particularly concerning experimental technologies such as AI and SSI. These gaps risk exacerbating exclusion, especially for rural communities, marginalized children, children with disabilities, and families without reliable connectivity.

265. In concluding, the presenter outlined key recommendations for State Parties, the AU, and RECs. States were encouraged to adopt a whole-of-government approach by integrating CRVS into national digital public infrastructure, strengthening legislation to recognize electronic records and protect children's data, expanding digital and offline registration services, building interoperability across sectors, investing in infrastructure, and ensuring inclusive, multilingual platforms. The presentation also stressed the importance of community engagement, training of frontline personnel, sustained public awareness campaigns, and youth participation in system design. At the continental level, the AU and RECs were urged to develop model laws, harmonize data standards, provide technical and financial support, and enhance monitoring and

accountability mechanisms. The Committee and participants of the Session welcomed the presentation and noted that the forthcoming Guidance Note will support Member States in advancing rights-based, inclusive digital birth registration systems.

ITEM 36 : Consideration of the Complementary Report consideration- on State Party Report of the Republic of Burundi

266. The Committee considered and deliberated on the complementary report on the Periodic Report of the Republic of Burundi. The State Party's Periodic Report will be considered during the 47th Ordinary Session

ITEM 37 : Consideration of the Complementary Report consideration- on State Party Report of the Republic of Kenya

267. The Committee considered and deliberated on the complementary report on the Periodic Report of the Republic of Kenya. The State Party's Periodic Report will be considered during the 47th Ordinary Session

ITEM 38 : Hearing on Communication No. 019/Com/001/2022 Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa and Mr. Solomon Joojo Cobbinah (on behalf of schoolgirls living in villages along the River Offin in the Ashanti Region of Ghana) against the Republic of Ghana

268. The Committee did not proceed with the scheduled Hearing and decided to grant the Respondent State the requested extension to submit its response regarding the ongoing amicable settlement process.

269. The Applicants appeared before the Committee, although the Hearing was cancelled, to express their views on the Respondent State's request. They reiterated the ongoing impact of the alleged violations on children and emphasised the continued nature of the harm.

270. The Applicants requested that the Committee proceed to consider the Communication on the merits at its next Ordinary Session should Ghana fail to submit its response within the three-month timeframe granted.

271. They further noted that an additional Hearing is not required, in line with the Communication Guidelines, which do not oblige the Committee to hold a hearing.

272. The Committee will issue a decision on this Communication at the 47th Ordinary Session should no response be received from the Respondent State by the lapse of the three-month requested extension.

ITEM 39: PRESENTATION ON BUDGETS AND PROJECTS

273. Under the first agenda item, the Project Coordinator of ACCP presented to the Committee an update on the African Children's Charter Project (ACCP), the four-year project running from 2024 to June 2028. The presentation recalled that the Project is structured around three objectives, namely: supporting State Parties in advancing children's rights in selected thematic areas; strengthening the engagement of civil

society organisations with the Committee and State Parties; and supporting the promotion and protection mandate of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

274. The Committee was updated on the progress achieved in 2025, following the update provided during the 45th Ordinary Session. The presentation highlighted key achievements across the three objectives, including technical support to the Committee and its Secretariat, support to the work of thematic Working Groups, development of research and knowledge products informing the Committee's work, strengthened engagement with Regional Economic Communities, and the convening of stakeholder forums and thematic symposia on child rights issues. The Project Coordinator further indicated that priority areas for implementation in 2026, budgetary considerations, implementation arrangements, lessons learned, and requests to the Committee were also presented.

275. As the second agenda item, the Secretariat presented to the Committee on the execution of the 2025 Budget, the proposed Budget for 2026, and the planned activities under the Committee's Strategic Focus Areas. The Secretariat indicated that implementation of the 2025 Budget was good across both Programme and Operational components and outlined the approved budget for the 2026 year. The Secretariat further presented the key Strategic Objectives guiding the 2026 workplan, as well as an overview of ongoing projects and partnership arrangements, including support from the European Union under the AGA framework, 2025 implementation of activities supported by GIZ, and the African Children's Charter Project (ACCP).

276. The Committee took note of the presentations.

ITEM 40 : CONSIDERATION OF COMMUNICATIONS.

277. The Committee considered and adopted as amended decisions on:

- The Admissibility of Communication No:0026/Com/001/2025 submitted by Mr. Emhemed Elremalli On behalf of Mohamed Elremalli (a minor) against the State of Libya
- The Merits of Communication No 0017/Com/001/2021 submitted by Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network, Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa and Centre for Human Rights (On Behalf of Children Affected by Witchcraft Accusations in Nigeria) against the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- The Merits of Communication No: 0020/Com/002/2022 submitted by Lawyers Associated for Human Rights in Africa (on behalf of Children of Jehovah's Witnesses) against the State of Eritrea; and
- The Merit of Communication No: 0021/Com/003/2022 submitted by People Serving Girls at Risk and Equality Now (on behalf of Esnart Kenesi) against the Republic of Malawi.

278. The Committee deliberated and decided on the way forward of the below Communications:

- ✓ Communication No. 0019/Com/001/2022-The Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa and Mr. Solomon Joojo Cobbinah on behalf of schoolgirls living along the River Offin in the Ashanti Region against the Republic of Ghana: The Committee considered the request of the Respondent State to extend the finalisation of the Amicable Settlement. Having heard from the Applicants that

this is the final extension they agree to, the Committee granted 3 months to the Respondent State to finalise the Amicable Settlement. The Committee further decided to proceed and adopt a decision on the matter if the Respondent State fails to comply with the extension deadline.

- ✓ Communication No:0023/Com/005/2022 IHRDA and Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria (On Behalf of Children in Nigeria) against the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Committee deferred the consideration of the merits of the Communication and decided to adopt the decision on the merits during the next session after considering the submission of the Respondent State and the Observation of the Applicants on the arguments of the Respondent State.
- ✓ Communication No 024/Com/001/2024 submitted by Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) (on behalf of ACM) against the Republic of Botswana: The Committee decided to give the Respondent State an extension of 15 days to finalise the amicable settlement and share the signed version. The Committee decided to proceed with adopting a decision on the merits if the Respondent State fails to finalise the amicable settlement in the said time.

ITEM 41: ADOPTION OF DECISIONS

Request from Partners

279. The Committee considered and issued decision on the requests received from its Partners to take the following activities:

- To Develop Continental Guidelines on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights to create a unified framework that aligns national laws, policies, and programs. Regarding this request, the Committee noted that its previously developed General Comment on Article 27 and Study on Teenage Pregnancy address the issue sufficiently and hence there is no need to adopt a separate Guidelines at this point.
- To Commission a continental study on orphanage trafficking to establish the scale, drivers, and cross border dynamics of the problem. Considering the fact that one its partners, AfriChild, is currently in the process of developing the same study, the Committee decided not to develop another study on the same matter.
- Undertake an independent fact-finding mission to assess the situation in the United Republic of Tanzania in the context of the ongoing unrest. The Committee declined this request.

Matters of Working Groups

280. The Committee considered and adopted the planned activities of its Working Groups, and their respective documents as follows:

- a. *For the Working Group on Children's Rights and Climate Change the Committee adopted:*
 - Advocacy brief on floods and droughts which is primarily extracted from the continental study

- Advocacy brief on conflict and climate change which is also extracted from the continental study and
 - The proposal to submit observations of the Committee to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Advisory Opinion proceedings on climate change
- b. *For the Working group on children's rights and business the Committee adopted as amended:*
- Policy brief on access to remedies for victims of corporate induced child rights violations
- c. *For the Working group on children's rights with disabilities the Committee adopted as amended:*
- Resolution on Children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities
 - Position Paper on education for children with disabilities
- d. *For the Working group on implementation of decisions the Committee*
- Adopted as amended the Guidelines/Indicators on State Compliance with the Decisions and Recommendations of the ACERWC
 - Adopted the proposal to Submit a report on the status of implementation of decisions to the PRC subcommittee on democracy, governance, and human rights
 - Adopted the proposal to develop a Policy brief on the designation of specific national focal points within governments relating to the implementation of the ACERWC's decisions
 - Adopted the proposal to develop a reporting template on the implementation of decisions

281. During its seating, the Committee also deliberated on appointment of external experts for its Working Groups. After a careful consideration of the applications submitted for the call for external experts for its Working Groups, the Committee appointed external experts as below on a condition that they accept the appointment:

- a. For the Working Group on Children's Rights and Business
- Dr. Chairman Okoloise
 - Dr. Martha Mutisi
 - Ms Mary Chavula
 - Prof. Iyabode Ogunniran
- b. For the Working Group on Children's Rights and Climate Change
- Mr Malama Mwila
 - Dr Aderomola Adeola
 - Prof Ademola Oluborode Jegede
 - Retta Getachew Demisse
- c. For the Working Group on Children with Disabilities

- Dr Shimelis Tsegaye
 - Mr Dagnachew Bogale
 - Dr Basirat Razaq-Shuaib
 - Dr Sharna-Lee Clarke
- d. Working on Implementation of Decisions
- Prof Nsongurua Johnson Udombana- Nigeria
 - Prof Delladj-Sebaa Fatima Zohra
 - Prof Mboumegne Dzesseu
 - Ms Lydia Winyi Kembabazi

Documents

282. The Committee adopted as amended the following documents:

- The Resolution on Targeted State Party Reporting.
- The Guidelines on Inter-session Reports of Committee Members
- The Evaluation report of its Strategic Plan 2021-2025.
- Thematic report on Harmful Practices Affecting Children's Rights developed under the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and Other Harmful Practices.
- The Guidance Note on Digitalization of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics: With a Focus on Birth Registration developed under the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Birth Registration and Nationality.
- The Analytical Tripartite Study on Challenges of Litigating Women and Girls' Rights considering that its comments are taken into account in the final version and upon the adoption of the same by the other two organs namely, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

283. The Committee decided to develop the following documents on a condition that resource is available from its partners:

- A study on the recruitment of children by armed groups in conflict zones with the guidance of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Children in Conflict Situations considering that the request was made by the Executive Council of the African Union with Decision No EX.CL/Dec.1248 (XLIV-2024).
- A continental benchmark on investment and budgeting for children with the guidance of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Investment and Budgeting for Children
- A Guiding Note on the Establishment and Strengthening of Children's Parliaments and a Child friendly version of the Child Participation Guidelines with the guidance of its Special Rapporteur on Child Participation
- A Thematic report on the Cost of Hunger and Malnutrition: Implications for the Right to Health of Children- needs a decision; Guidelines for Addressing Mental

Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for Children in Africa; and Policy Brief on Access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) for Children in Africa under the guidance of its Special Rapporteur on Health

284. The Committee deferred the consideration and adoption of the following documents to the 47th Ordinary Session with a view to deliberate on the contents in depth:

- Resolution on independence and impartiality of Members of the Committee
- Resolution on the Establishment of the Working Group on Communications to the next session to further deliberate on the matter.

285. The Committee assigned Hon Poloko Nuggert Ntshwarang to work on the Draft Report on the ACERWC mandate and activities in advancing girls rights in Africa and table the same for adoption during the next session.

286. With regards to the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, the Committee decided to discuss and deliberate with the African Union Commission to ensure the renewal of the mandate of the 'Special Rapporteur on Ending Child Marriage of the African Union' through the decision of the Executive Council every two years as was the practice.

Theme of the Day of the Africa Child

287. The Committee adopted the theme of the Day of the African Child for 2026 to be 'Ensuring universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene for every child in Africa'.

Application for Observer Status

288. The Committee considered and decided on applications for observer status as follows:

- Grant observer status to:
 - i. Ismail Mahomed Center for Human and Peoples' Rights based in South Africa
 - ii. Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa based in Uganda
 - iii. Child Rights Network for Southern Africa (CRNSA) based in South Africa
 - iv. Volunteers Welfare for Community Based Care of Zambia (VOWAZA)
 - v. Niger Child Rights CSOs Coalition
 - vi. Zamara Foundation based in Kenya
 - vii. Eastern African Child Rights Network (EACRN) based Kenya
 - viii. MAAT for Peace Development and Human Rights based in Egypt
 - ix. EPAD based in Niger
 - x. RIPIER from Congo
- Request additional information from
 - i. Biomedical Research and Training Institute based in Zimbabwe to submit its updated registration or permission to operate past 2019, funding information, and proof of its prior engagement with the Committee

- ii. DisMoi based in Mauritius to submit its source of funding
- iii. African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) based in Uganda to submit its registration document in Uganda
- iv. African Children Development based in Lesotho to submit valid financial statement
- v. Network for Community Development based in Uganda to submit proof of prior engagement with the Committee
- vi. Women and Rural Development Networks based in Uganda to submit audited financial statement and proof of its prior engagement with the Committee
- vii. Zireenza Support Foundation based in Nigeria to submit proof of its prior engagement with the Committee
- viii. Farm Orphan Support Trust FOST based in Zimbabwe to submit its updated registration document and proof of its prior engagement with the Committee
- ix. Youth Volunteers based in Chad to submit its full application with its registration document, source of funding, commitment letter, and activity report among others
- x. Nyale Institute based in Malawi to submit proof of its prior engagement with the Committee

Next session date

289. The Committee decided to hold its 47th Session on 06 - 16 May 2026.

Adoption of Report

290. The Committee adopted as amended the report of its 46th Session pending the incorporation of its inputs within two weeks.

ITEM :42 CLOSING

291. During the closing session of the 46th Ordinary Session, the Vice Chairperson of the ACERWC, Hon Ghislain Roch Etsan, reflected on the successful commemoration of the 35th Anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, noting that the milestone underscored the Committee's long-standing commitment to advancing children's rights across the continent. The Chair highlighted that the session benefitted from high-level ideas and rich deliberations, supported by a series of working group meetings, symposiums, intergenerational dialogues, technical workshops, and constructive interactions with Member States.

292. The Vice Chairperson further emphasized that the session was significantly enriched by the participation of civil society organizations, National Human Rights Institutions, African Union and United Nations organs, and Member States, and noted with appreciation the active involvement of children throughout all segments of the programme, affirming the commitment of the Committee to enhancing meaningful child participation. It was underlined that the election of a new Bureau was an essential step toward ensuring institutional continuity and strengthening the Committee's mandate in the promotion and protection of children's rights. Hon Etsan expressed gratitude to the

Secretariat for the professionalism, dedication, and excellence exhibited in facilitating a productive and successful session. In closing, the Chairperson stressed the importance of translating the commitments made during the session into tangible actions capable of effecting meaningful change in the lives of children in Africa. The session concluded with well-wishes for the New Year and the formal declaration that the 46th Ordinary Session of the ACERWC is closed.